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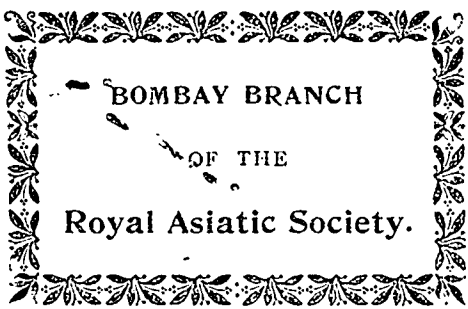

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A WINTER'S JOURNEY

(TÀTAR,)

FROM

CONSTANTINOPLE TO TEHRAN;

WITH

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TRAVELS THROUGH VARIOUS PARTS OF PERSIA,

&c.

BY JAMES BAILLIE FRASER, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF

"A TOUR IN THE HIMALAYA MOUNTAINS," "THE KUZZILBASH,"

ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

Publisher in Ordinary to Her Majesty.

1838.

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A WINTER'S JOURNEY

FROM

CONSTANTINOPLE TO TEHRAN.

LETTER I.

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Tehran, March 1838.

DEAR ——,

YOU will not wonder that I have suffered some days to pass at this place before beginning a letter even to you; that the charms of "idless"—the sheer passive delight of rest, after so long a period of sustained exertion, should have seduced me into an apparent neglect . . . . . But in point of fact I have not been idle; my occupations have been only altered, not suspended, and hearing and speak-

ing, and seeing and writing, have employed me as closely, though not so laboriously, as during any period of my journey. I will now, however, try to make up to you for lost time, and give you some idea of what is passing here, in so far as it is likely to interest you; and for that purpose I know no better method to pursue than to transcribe certain portions of my journal for your benefit.

The day after my arrival, March the 9th, being Sunday, was truly a day of rest, and as such did I most thankfully enjoy it. The sufferings I endured from cold are not, it seems, uncommon here, and are often attended with more fatal effects. In talking over them to-day with Sir J. Campbell, he mentioned that after the preceding winter, which was a very severe one, as the snow melted, a number of dead bodies were found on all the roads. That on the arrival of Captain Hawkins, in his way overland to India, he had sent out a muleteer to bring in this gentleman's baggage, which had remained behind. This man, himself severely frost-bitten, observing several stray mules in the vicinity of Sulee-maniah, without any one to look after them, near a ruined tower on the road side, went up to it, and looking in found six men, of whom five were dead; the sixth had life enough to beg the man to lift him on one of the mules and take him away; but the muleteer was unable to dismount himself, far less to assist another, so he left the poor wretch and rode on to Tehran, giving notice at the gateway of what he had seen, and then rode straight to the Residency, where he remained long under medical care, having lost some of his fingers. In the same

way eight Russians were lost in a snow-drift, and found there after the melting of the snow.

10th March.—Went this morning with Macniel, to call on my old friend Meerza Abul Hussun Khan, who, as you know, formerly enacted the part of ambassador from his Persian majesty to England. He is now minister for foreign affairs here, and, as it is reported, may possibly once more appear in London in a diplomatic capacity, though I think it unlikely. The old gentleman recognized me at once, and received me with great cordiality, which I was the better pleased with, as I feared that certain criticisms on his character and conduct in a former work of mine, however merited, might have given him offence. I afterwards found that he had seen the book, but that a mutual friend had kindly removed the dangerous pages, on which, in spite of his own imperfect knowledge of English, he might have unfortunately stumbled. He has been much offended by the liberties taken with him by Morier in his "Hajji Baba." "It was," he said, "very bad, sir—very bad; no true, sir—no honest; 'pon my honour, sir;" interlarding his strange English with some more grammatically correct, but not more complimentary remarks, in Persian. I found the Khan changed rather in look than in manner; time had indeed somewhat thinned his flowing and splendid black beard, but his figure was rather plumped up than bent by its "iron hand." He was indeed a jolly Chinese joss-looking old boy; his features still handsome, and with the same rapid rattling mode of delivery as ever; the same *abandon* and thoughtlessness in conversation, mingled with no small

shrewdness of remark, and quickness of perception. We had a full dish of politics from the old gentleman, who, in profession at least, is our staunch friend, and as anti-Russian as the most patriotic Persian could wish. But a more detailed account of our visit, which was of no ordinary length, would be more likely to weary than to edify you, and so I spare you its tediousness.

Next morning, the 11th, we called upon Mahomed Khan Doombellee, a brother of the nobleman I had met at Khoee, and of high rank, though fallen fortunes. He is, I believe, *Kooller-aghassee*, or commander of the gholaums, and much respected on account of his family and tribe, both of which are very noble; but he enjoys no great degree of influence. On our way home we called again upon the old ambassador, or, as he is more facetiously than reverently termed here, on account of his corpulence, "*Old Fatty*." Both at this time, and in the former visit, the conversation ran chiefly upon the aspect of affairs, and the state of the king's health, on which so much depends. His majesty's health appears unquestionably to be failing fast, in great measure in consequence of his own irregular habits, particularly in his food. He is labouring under an intermittent, yet eats loads of the most indigestible things. They say he drank some ten or a dozen quarts of melon-juice the other day, to balance which he also took, I dare not venture to say, how many grains of quinine.

12th March.—Went to call upon my old friend and ally, Meerza Tuckee Alliabadee, the person who, you may remember, liberated me from a very disa-

greeable limbo at Resht, in Ghilân; when, during my first travels in this country, I was confined there by the orders of the young Shahzadeh. He received me with great kindness; but, alas! time had laid a heavy hand on him. I remember him a sharp intelligent-looking man, whose energetic mind appeared to harmonize well with his slight but active frame: he was now a withered old man, with sunken cheeks, sharp nose, and hollow voice. His eyes alone retained some share of their pristine vivacity, and his countenance was still shrewd and observant, with, occasionally, so strong a resemblance to that cast of features attributed to Mephistophiles as might startle a physiognomist.

In the afternoon we visited the Ameen-u-dowlut, or chief minister of the state, and son to the late Hadjee Mahomed Hoossein Khan, Sudr Ameen, whom I so well remember at Ispahan, when my poor friend Jukes died there, on his way to the capital. This nobleman, who enjoys the entire confidence of the Shah in his own department, which is that of revenue and the "home department," received us with great simplicity and kindness. There is nothing distinguished in his appearance; but he has an honest openness of countenance, which, it is said, belongs to his character. He is sincerely religious, and straightforward in his conduct; and has maintained through prosperity and adversity a dignity and firmness which have gained universal respect; and a preponderance in the councils of the king that has been proof against all occasional storms. He is, however, remarkably superstitious, and this was several times displayed

in a strong though ludicrous manner, during the very interesting conversation which occurred on this occasion. You have heard of the common practice in Persia of taking a *fâl*, that is, a sort of omen or response, before deciding on any important step. This is done by opening at random, either a Koran, or a copy of Hafiz, and watching the sentence which first meets the eye—the meaning of this sentence, properly interpreted, determines the seeker's conduct. Sometimes the rosary of beads, which every pious Mussulmaun carries with him, serves the purpose, by a sort of "odds or evens?" process, the person who seeks a response grasping it at random after muttering a prayer, and then counting the number of beads so separated from the string. The rosary was scarcely ever out of the Ameen's hand for this purpose. Before every fresh remark to the Envoy, we saw the catch of the fingers, and the movement of the lips; and this was equally done to decide whether he should take a second cup of tea, or communicate some important fact, connected with the welfare of both Persian and British interests, to the ambassador of the latter power.

15th March.—Visited *Allah Yar-khan*, Kajar, *Ausef-u-dowlut*, the first subject as regards rank in Persia, after the princes of the blood royal; being the head of one great branch of the Kajar tribe, and brother-in-law to the late Abbas Meerza, by marriage; that prince having married his sister, and thus united in the persons of his children the two branches of the tribe—namely, the Eucharee-Bâsh, and Ashagha-Bâsh. It were

to be wished, that this nobility of blood were accompanied with a corresponding dignity of soul; but unhappily the very reverse is the case, as, for falsehood, deceit, and treachery, according to general report, he has scarcely his equal in Persia—and that is a large word. His object is power, let who will be king; and to preserve power there is nothing he will not do. As for English or Russians, the highest bidder is sure to have the Ausef—so he intrigues as deep as he can with both parties, and would sell either to the other—or to the arch enemy himself, to gain a tomaun of cash or a point of power. Still he is one of the politest and best-bred noblemen in Persia; and did he not lie so grossly and gratuitously, his conversation would be very agreeable. His impudence, too, is quite equal to his other qualities. In the course of this conversation, he took the bull completely by the horns, and precluded all possible challenge on the score of veracity, by appealing a dozen times to the Envoy, to vouch for his truthfulness; and putting it to him, whether he, Sir John, ever heard a word of doubtful or double meaning issue from his mouth?

The king is understood to be better to-day. The native physicians, alarmed, waited on Mr. Macneil, to state to him the old monarch's case, which had been egregiously mismanaged. A single effective dose of medicine administered by that gentleman's advice changed the face of affairs, and relieved the Shah, who, in consequence, was able to come out and receive his ministers in a room in the garden.

17th March.—My friend Bonham, and Captain

Macdonald arrived to-day from Tabreez, having set out two days after me, and staged it at their leisure. We all rode out to meet them, and with gholaums and servants made rather a brilliant cavalcade. What a different thing it is to ride a capital horse at your own pleasure, from being forced to mount a miserable jade, just at night-fall, and whip and spur it on a long weary stage, with the comfortable prospect of having to repeat the same game at the end of it!

20th March.—The poor old king appears to be breaking fast, in mind and body both. His health has been varying for the last few days; and this morning, they say, he broke out into violent abuse of his physicians, and drove them from his presence. They had been remonstrating with him about his excesses in eating, both as to quantity and quality: his majesty asked them what he should eat.—"Chicken broth," they said; upon which he got into a passion, swore that they wanted to kill the king; that they had been purging and working him till his inside was all gone, and now they would give him nothing but warm water. At last his fury rose so high, that he seized a book to throw at them; but instead of the person aimed at, it hit a *goold-dán*, or flower-stand, which was thrown down, and water, flowers, and all were spilt. This made matters worse; he called for his sword, but it fortunately was out of the way upon a shelf; so he seized his stick, sprang up, and was proceeding to vent his wrath on the *medicos* with his own hand, when one of them fainted from terror, and the chief physician whisked out of the room with more haste than

dignity. Some have it, that this last personage stood firm, and remonstrated with the Shah, saying, it did not become a king to speak or conduct himself in such a manner; but that he (the physician) was sensible that it was not the Shah, but his disease that spoke — and with that he quitted the apartment. Be this as it may, his majesty felt rebuked; order was restored, and on the morrow he sent for and apologized to his physicians.

All this, however, the very precarious state of the king's health, and the equally unsettled situation of the succession and of public affairs, give rise to many a serious and anxious reflection in all of us English here, particularly in those whose public duties throw upon them a high degree of responsibility, or who have families here within the walls of Tehran. There is too much truth in what my friend, Shereef Khan, of Câsveen, says, that Tehran is no safe place in case of such a political ferment as the king's death might cause. Nothing is talked of but the state of the country, and the civil wars that are expected to arise from the struggles of the several princes, aspirants for the throne. Indeed, the existing state of circumstances within the capital is such, that a tumult at the very least, and probably a state of siege, may be looked for immediately on his present majesty's demise.

Of all the more powerful princes, whose pretensions would be supported by a share of public opinion, as well as by their own dependents, not one is in or near the capital. That important ground is occupied by Allee Shah Meerza, the full brother of the late prince royal, entitled *Zil-e-Sooltaun*, or

"the Shadow of the King," who is governor of the ark, or palace of Tehran, the dwelling of the Shah, and repository of his treasure. Of this fortress he, who is also a pretender to the throne, would, as a matter of course, hold possession; and on that treasure he would seize so soon as the breath is out of the king's body; so that the city would, probably, be placed in a state of siege by the adherents of some of the other princes. But this is not the worst of the prospect. Tehran, like every other capital city, is the rendezvous of a multitude of adventurers, rogues, and vagabonds, who thrive best in times of trouble, and who would not, assuredly, lose so splendid an opportunity of driving their trade as would be afforded by the state of effervescence consequent upon the death of the king; from them no one would be safe, and the general good will of the inhabitants would prove no protection. The probability is, that every house holding forth a prospect of plunder would be assaulted by these *looties*, or blackguards of Tehran; and the belief that much treasure is always to be found in the English Residency would, doubtless, tempt them thither at a very early period. Even the friendships of its inmates with numerous distinguished natives would but increase its danger, as many would be apt, in case of disturbance, to seek for themselves and their treasure an asylum within its walls, as being the safest place from the violence of party rancour. To deny such an asylum might not, in every case, be possible; and thus would be increased the attractions for violence and rapine.

It is true that more than one—nay, many of the

influential and powerful chiefs resident in Tehran, from motives of private regard have often assured the Envoy and inhabitants of the Residency, that they and their adherents would personally guard the English party in case of danger; but, however gratifying this expression of good feeling might be, it was but too well known that many things might occur to render their good intentions unavailing. In short, it is an anxious time, and as each day and hour brings its report, and the occurrences within the palace become dimly noised abroad, you will not be surprised that our own critical situation becomes a frequent subject of conversation; and that the measures to be taken in case of the worst, as well as our means of defence, come often under consideration. One thing is felt by all, and that is, the expediency of getting the ladies and children removed out of harm's way. Various considerations have induced the Envoy and Macneil to resolve on sending their respective families home, and this resolution has been confirmed by the alarming character of the approaching juncture; so that we shall probably soon lose in Lady Campbell and Mrs. Macneil the most agreeable part of our social circle, and the source of our most serious anxiety, together.

21st March.—This day and to-morrow are the chief days of the *Eede*, or festival of the *no-Roz*, the new year of the Persians, being the vernal equinox, and usually a great day in Persia. It had been a question ever since the time of my arrival, whether his majesty was likely to be well enough to keep this festival, or would do so according to use and wont, even if he were. It has at

length been resolved to *postpone* the public celebration of the *Eede* until the period fixed for the marriage of one of the king's sons, by his favourite wife or queen, the *Taj-u-dowlut*, whose nuptials are to be celebrated with great splendour. His majesty, with his usual economy, thinks that as he must give many thousand *khelats*, or dresses of honour, on this occasion, and go to great expense, he may as well save those usually given on the *Eede*, and make the one outlay do for both. Indeed, he means, it is understood, to cram in a good many subordinate royal weddings of cousins and second cousins, like *entremets* in a feast, and so get over the whole at one *coup*. Thus, when Bonham and I went this day to ride through the bazars, in hopes of seeing a brilliant display, we saw little worth looking at. There were a few pageants of coloured paper and gold leaf, and sweetmeats, made into the shape of gardens, and groves, and palaces, something in the fashion of our Twelfth-night exhibitions, carried about; and great trays of confectionery, covered with gold cloth and shawls, were paraded on men's heads; and a quantity of coloured eggs, gilt apples, and tinsel, were displayed in the shops; but there was nothing like the bustle usually seen on this occasion. In fact, great anxiety on the subject of the king's health appeared to be the predominant feeling. One great Armenian merchant expressed himself very strongly: "We are all in a scrape," said he; "as for me, I have all my fortune, nearly one hundred thousand tomauns, out and at stake: if the Shah lives awhile I shall do well; if not, why, we have all put our foot in it."

We called on old Meerza Abul Hussun Khan, to wish him "a happy *Eede*," but we found him laid up, suffering sadly from mischievous boils in the fattest parts of his fat carcass; he was full of pain and scandal, which last, of a political nature, he loves as well as ever an old maiden at home does a bit of secret, family, or personal history: you know we can have none *here* in which the *ladies* are concerned, and there would be but poor amusement for your home scandal-mongers; but it does not languish for want of the beverage which is said to be so great a promoter of it in England, for we chat here over a capital dish of tea, too sweet for home palates, perfect syrup, and generally without milk, but excellent in flavour.

The old gentleman is truly a sad allusive person; he has no measure in talking of those he dislikes, and many a bitter sarcasm he vented to-day, and many an absurd anecdote did he tell in his strange mixture of Persian and English. Among other things, however, he mentioned a rather spirited "*on dit*" of the old king. The Prince Governor of Fars, Hassan Allee Meerza, who, like many of his royal brothers, is very remiss in revenual matters, has suffered so long a time to elapse without even the smallest apology for a remittance, that the Shah has at length lost all patience, and threatens to go himself to Sheerauz and collect the money. A day or two ago, it is said, he broke out with perfect fury, and ordered the following message to be forthwith sent to the Prince:—"Either you are *yaghee* (in a state of rebellion), or you are not; if the latter, send all arrears due without delay—

if the former, say so honestly, and come and meet the Shah with your army. The Shah will be on the road to Fars after the *mohurrum*.—*Bismillah!* come to Khooskizurd, and fight it out there!"

23rd March.—A cold frosty wind—water frozen out of doors. While the Envoy was receiving a visit from the Malek-ul-Shäer, or poet-laureat, son and successor of old Futeh Allee Khan, from whom I had formerly received great kindness, we were informed that a certain nobleman, a cousin of the king's, Hassain Allee Khan, Kajar, was in the garden of the Residency, and meant to call upon the Envoy. This gentleman, who is the son of Mustapha Koolee Khan, a brother of Aga Mahomed Khan, is a very fine dashing fellow. It was he who, by a spirited charge on the heights of Aberân during the last war with Russia, was chiefly instrumental in causing a battalion of Russian regulars to lay down their arms: but he has one great fault; he is not only a *khoosh goozerán*, or *bon vivant*, but a downright drunkard. Hours and days does he pass in drinking; and as the garden of the Residency is one of the pleasantest spots within the walls of Tehran, this jolly Khan frequently honours it with his presence, and spends the live-long day under the shade of its cypresses, glass in hand. On this occasion, after paying his respects to the Envoy, he retired to his favourite retreat, with a store of good liquor which he had provided; and, piercing cold though it was, commenced his orgies. Even so late as near eight o'clock at night, when we were all sitting after dinner over our sober glass of wine, we heard he was still there.

We had just then taken a sip of delicious rum-shrub as a liqueur, and somebody observed, "How Hassan Allee Khan would smack his lips at this!" "Let us send it to him," said the Envoy. "By all means:—say we have just been tasting it, and having approved of it, we send it to the Khan, in hopes he may take a glass." In a very short while the Khan returned for answer, "that the Elchees' *wine* was excellent, and that in lieu thereof he sent a bottle of his own, with his respects, and hoping that it would prove to the taste of the gentlemen." It turned out to be very tolerable Tehran wine, of a bright light Madeira colour, and a flavour which, if improved by a few years' keeping, would have been excellent.

Next day, March 24th, we went to visit this determined toper, who received us in one of the prettiest rooms I have seen in Persia. It is what is called a *zere-zemeen*, or vaulted cellar, underground, somewhat in the form of a cross, the walls of which are fitted up beautifully with mosaic work, in lackered tiles, for about three feet from the floor, and the rest with plaster, cût into *tâkchehs*, or sundry little niches and recesses, all neatly ornamented. In each *tâkcheh* there was a *bouquet* of waxen flowers, imitating lilies, jonquils, gilder and tube-roses, &c.; and a quantity of oranges and lemons, ornamented with gilding, were ranged round the surbase of the apartment. There was but one window at the top of the cross, and under this there were pots and frames of flowers and green things, and fruits were placed all round it. The fire-place was opposite, at the bottom, and on either side of it we sat.

The roof was of a pure white shining plaster, ornamented with a carved pattern, and the corners were cut curiously into a multitude of little arches, propping each other, after a form common in the country, but difficult to describe. The whole thing had a most pleasing effect, and I am told that it is the coolest room in Tehran in summer, and the warmest in winter. The Khan does not let the beauties or comforts of this pleasant apartment be lost for lack of use; for I am informed that he occasionally has most capital *recherché* dinners here, followed by symposia, at which there is no lack of his favourite amber-coloured liquor; and I have heard of his giving a feast of this sort to his English friends, with the whole floor of the room spread three or four inches deep of rose-leaves! There is a poetical flight of a Persian Khan for you! They say, poor man, that a soft substratum to recline upon is quite necessary, as before the feast is over he is generally fast asleep upon the floor, unable to move a limb.

25th March.—This forenoon accompanied Macneil to visit Manoocheher Khan, the *Moatimud-u-dowlut*, or "trusted of the state;" the confidential minister and most particular favourite of the king. This man is an eunuch, and his history is remarkable. At the age, as I have heard, of eighteen, when he had already been sometime married, and was a father, he, together with Khosroo Khan, both Georgians by birth, were taken prisoners in war, and both inhumanly reduced to their present situation. They were afterwards both taken into the service of the king; and, strange as it may seem, instead of bear-

ing an eternal and unquenchable hatred to the author of their misfortune, they became his most faithful and confidential servants. Manoocheher Khan, in time, was raised to the rank of Khojah Bashee, or chief eunuch of the harem, in which he was everything; but lately he has been promoted to the rank of minister, as I have said, and has been also intrusted with the government of Ghilan, where he resides a good deal. He still, however, appears to retain the chief charge of the harem, and is, perhaps, the most influential person about his majesty. He is one of the ablest, and, as I hear, of the most respectable men about the court; and if not absolutely free from Persian vices, is at least far more upright and honest than the great majority of Persian courtiers.

The Khan has apartments in the palace, which, on this visit, I entered for the first time. On passing the *durkhaneh*, or gateway, which opens from the great *Maidaun*, or Place, we observed the *Nassakchee Bashee*, or Provost-marshal, seated in a little room, with several of his men in attendance; and turning to the left through a vaulted passage, in which were several guard-rooms, hung with the accoutrements of the guards, all shabby enough, we made another turn to the right, which took us into a court, or garden, of about one hundred and fifty to one hundred and sixty yards long, by fifty or sixty wide. This is divided about the middle by the *Dewan Khaneh-e-Aum*, or public hall of audience, a brick building, consisting, as it appeared, of a large hall and several smaller apartments. Outside this building is poor enough, but within it is highly ornamented, in the usual Persian fashion, with paint-

ing, gilding, enamel work, small mirrors, and bits of looking-glass, all so disposed as to have a pretty, though a fragile effect. Within this hall is the great throne, a structure of Maragha marble, supported on figures grotesquely carved out of the same material, and exhibiting the forms of *Gins, Deeves,* and women, who, whether meant for fairies or hoories, are monstrously ill-favoured and fantastic.

That part of the garden in front of the Dewan Khaneh is divided by a canal of very dirty water, with fountains in it, having on either side paved walks, and rows of tall Chinar trees trimmed into a brush at top. Beds of shrubs and trees fill up the rest of the space, and a similar plan of division is pursued behind the building.

On either side of this Dewan Khaneh, as we passed, were groups of men of all ranks and stations, some seated in little knots, laying their heads close together in earnest talk; others lounging about, and standing against the walls and terraces. All were evidently on business or duty, or waiting to be employed, or forming the suite of some man of rank, who had been admitted to the interior. The whole, certainly, exhibited much the air and appearance of a princely *Durkhaneh.*

An open sort of arcade, to the left of the Dewan Khaneh, gives admission to the suite of buildings and offices which surround the upper division of the court. On the right, as we passed through this arcade, there was a doorway adorned with coarsely-enamelled tiles, at which several officials were seated, and which leads, as we learned, to the Shah's private apartments. Under the sill of this doorway lie the

bones of Nader Shah, taken up from his tomb at Mushed by Aga Mahomed Khan, the present monarch's uncle. He also took up the remains of the good Kereem Khan Zund, in order to submit them to the same indignity; but they were restored to their resting place again. I understood that the harem was behind the buildings then in view.

We found Manoocheher Khan in a small upper apartment, which we reached by passing through one or two ruinous courts, and by mounting a miserable staircase: a multitude of slippers at the top gave token of a number of guests within. The Khan, who of course occupied the highest seat, is a large fair man, with Georgian features, strongly marked, and a face which, though perfectly devoid of beard, is not at all wrinkled: in fact, he is not more, I believe, than forty years of age, although, like all eunuchs, he looks older than he is. The expression of his countenance is good-humoured, and his voice has nothing of the cracked or squeaking tone which belongs to persons in his situation. He was surrounded by a number of persons of distinction—the place next himself was occupied by the *Sippurdar* or *Sipahdar*,* a young man of twenty-five or twenty-seven years at the most, very good-looking, with features small and delicate, even to effeminacy, a perfect beauty of a beard curling round his dimpled chin and cheeks, glossy black mustachios and sidelocks, and small yet brilliantly glancing eyes. He was most gorgeously clad in a yellow silk

* The first means the shield-bearer; the second, the commander of the troops: the title has been interpreted both ways to me.

kabba, or dress, with a white-spotted shawl round his waist, in which was stuck a splendid jewelled dagger, the string of which terminated in a tassel of pearls. His cloak was of fine shawl, lined with very handsome fur: in short, he was a perfect *Pelham* of a Persian. But in spite of somewhat of the coxcombry of youth, he bears a good character, and is much respected. His father was a Georgian slave, who rose, as such people often do, so high in the confidence of the Shah, that he bestowed upon his favourite the government of certain central districts of Irâk, which furnish the principal part of the king's standing army. This trust he discharged so well, that his district became one of the best ordered and prosperous in Persia; but he did not altogether overlook his own interest, for, in the course of his administration, he amassed treasure, it is said, to the amount of 300,000 tomauns, or rather better than £150,000 sterling. This, at his death, according to the equitable custom of Persia, was claimable by the king, who, had any attempt at concealment been made, would have assuredly pounced upon the whole. So the son, the present Sipahdar, made a virtue of necessity, and tendered the whole to his majesty. The sequel is variously related Some say that the king received the offer graciously, but desired the young man to keep his treasure till the Shah should claim it, and be as good a servant as his father had been. Others say, that his majesty made a fair division, taking half and leaving half. Probably, the treasure did not amount to nearly so much as was said, and still, more probably, the whole property was by no means

produced. Be that as it may, the young man has retained his father's government; together with the command of the army; a most lucrative appointment, by which he must soon have made up for what the king may have taken. He is said now to be immensely rich, and yet he keeps his ground in the king's confidence and favour.

Among the company was old Meerza Abul Hussun Khan, quite upon his good behaviour, and my friend, Mahomed Khan Doombellee, who graciously acknowledged me; but soon there entered, with some fracas, an old, blind, ill-looking man, with a great turban, to receive whom all rose up, and who took the highest place: this was the Sheik-ool-Islam of Tehran. His presence seemed rather to annoy some of the company, and among the rest our friend *Fatty*, who got up and went away. It interrupted, too, and changed the tone of conversation, which had been before light and amusing. Among other things there was some talk of magic and conjurors, and Manoocheher Khan told us a story of a man he had seen, who performed some extraordinary feats and tricks with a handkerchief, which he held spread out with both hands, while voices came from under it, and it waved and moved up and down in an extraordinary manner, without any apparent agency of his. "The fellow," said the Khan, "declared that it was a *Gin* he had under command, which produced these appearances and noises; but I saw it was a trick, and watched him till I detected how he managed it, with a horn and a little bit of stick:—'Ai *khanch-khráb*, (you bankrupt rogue,) said I to him, 'why do you tell a lie, and say you have a *Gin* or *Deeve* to

do this; are not your own cleverness and skill more marvellous than that would be?'"

28th March.—We have had accounts of late, from time to time, of the approach to Tehran of the detachment of British officers and sergeants, which were solicited from the Bengal government by the late Prince Royal, and which have only lately landed at Bushire from India. Yesterday a messenger from their camp announced their arrival at Kinaragird, one stage from Tehran; and the whole English party, with the Envoy and suite at our head, followed by all our servants and attendants, rode out to meet and escort them into Tehran. We made a very tolerable show upon the whole, and having met the new-comers some ten miles from the city, our combined parties formed a most respectable and imposing, though not a very regular, line of march. It was an interesting incident, the meeting of so many countrymen in a strange land, and one which, as you may imagine, gave no small fillip to the life of our party at the Residency. It is not alone, at so remote a place as Tehran, that the addition of seven pleasant people to a small society would create a sensation.

29th March.—In company with Macneil and Mr. Brandt, consul of Trebizond, (now on a visit here,) I went to call on Manoocheher Khan, and to explain some improvements, suggested by the silk-dealers in England, as applicable to the preparation of the Ghilan raw-silk for the English market. The difficulty of introducing improvements into any of the manufactures of an ignorant people is at all times great, but must in Ghilan be particularly so,

from the peculiar state of relation between the landlords and cultivators, as well as by the state of the silk trade generally. The Moatimud, however, as governor of the province, anxious for its welfare, and himself a great speculator in silk, is the most likely person to bring such projected improvements to the test of experiment at all events; and, if good, they will force their own way, as, I am told, has been the case with the silk at Brousa, in Asia Minor, which in consequence of a certain change in the mode of reeling has nearly doubled in value. But I dare say you would not be much amused by a dissertation on the silk trade, so I will spare it for the present at least.

At the Khan's apartment we saw, among other distinguished personages, a very remarkable individual, Aga Bahrâm, a great favourite of the king's, and holding almost the highest rank, if not the very highest, among the eunuchs of the *Anderoon*. This person, most singular to tell, was born of neither sex, and yet, as the Persians say, when young, was possessed of more beauty of face and form "than the Almighty ever gave to any other human creature." This account is, in great measure, confirmed by those who remember Aga Bahrâm some fourteen or fifteen years ago; but certainly, whatever beauty he had, has now departed, although he is not above forty years of age. He has no beard, but the upper lip is covered with soft down, like those of some women, and the features, particularly the mouth, have much of feminine softness; yet the voice is very much that of a man; and though brought up chiefly in the harem, and having some feminine points of

appearance, the Aga is anything but effeminate in his habits. On the contrary, he excels in all martial and manly exercises; is the best rider and keeps the best horses in Tehran; is most expert at the use of the sword and spear, and one of the best, if not the very best, shot in Persia. He is, besides, a most pleasant and gentlemanly person, and bears in all respects a very good character.

The king, we hear, is greatly better; so much so, that he has ridden out several times, and this morning actually went to hunt, and killed an antelope near Shemroon. Such an occasion for screwing a little cash out of his rich nobles' pockets was not to be omitted; so, selecting four individuals, worthy of the royal favour, he sent a quarter to each, and received back an hundred ducats a piece for this mark of distinction from the *Shah-in-Shah*. Such in Persia is the blessed fate of the man "whom the king delighteth to honour!" I hear, too, he had a shooting match yesterday, on his favourite ground at the *Darwazeh-dowlut*, when he fired twenty shots and killed five sheep. No doubt his majesty got more than mere *Mash-allahs!* on the occasion.

1st April.—I am now here nearly a month; yet my plans for moving are still uncertain, further than this, that I am to proceed first to Khorasan, where Mahomed Meerza and his minister the Kaymmookam still remain, and where it is possible I may still find them, as their movements depend upon intrigues at this court, the event of which no one can foretel. I have abstained from boring you much with the state of politics in this country, which, however interesting to those on the spot,

would probably be voted a nuisance, like other "parish business," by those who are not in the secret; but to enable you to comprehend what I may have to talk about, and to follow me where I may have to go, I must, I believe, request your attention to some explanations which will involve a little both of politics and intrigue.

Abbas Meerza, the late Prince Royal, died, as I have told you, in Khorasan, while pursuing his advantages in that country, and endeavouring to achieve the conquest of Herât, from the Affghan prince who holds it. The result of the Russian war of 1827-8, so disastrous to Persia, and in which the Prince Royal had been so much and so unsuccessfully engaged, had determined him, as soon as his military establishment was somewhat re-organized and repaired, to attempt some exploit in which the chances of success might be greater, in order to efface from the minds of his subjects and the country the impression of his late failure. After due deliberation, he resolved to undertake the reduction of Khorasan, a remote province, full of chiefs who considered themselves as virtually independent, and inhabited by a fierce population, who agreed together in nothing so well as in an utter detestation of the whole Kajar race.

But his royal highness was impelled to the conquest of Khorasan by other motives besides that of effacing from his military reputation the stain of defeat and loss, and of reducing to subjection a rebellious province. The Toorkomans of the desert and the Oozbeck states still carried on a system of man-stealing, which depopulated the

north of Khorasan, and consigned the Persian Sheahs to slavery with Soonnee masters. This was to be put a stop to; the Toorkomans were to be repressed, the Oozbecks punished. The state of Khyvah, to which he asserted his claim as part of the Persian empire, was to be reduced to acknowledge the Shah's supremacy; and the trade not only in Persian, but in Russian captives, which had given a just cause of remonstrance to Russia, was to be abolished to all futurity; a measure which would remove all pretence for aggression or encroachment from that power on the side of Orenburgh; and finally, he should establish his character as an orthodox and zealous Mussulmaun, which some had ventured to doubt, by rescuing from the dread of sacrilegious profanation the holy shrines of Mushed, and relieving all pious and true believers from the dangers heretofore incident to a pilgrimage to that saintly place.

Such were the purposes with which Abbas Meerzâ commenced his progress eastward; directing his march first towards Kermân, then governed by one of his rival brothers, Hoossein Allee Meerza, who was formerly governor of Khorasan. This place was reduced after considerable resistance, and the army then proceeded to Khorasan. I do not mean to inflict upon you a history of the campaigns that followed, although an account of the events which took place might not be deficient in interest, for there is much in them of adventure and incident, of hardship and suffering, of bold deeds and daring enterprize; but it is sufficient for my present purpose to say, that in the course

of little more than two years, every chief of consequence in Khorasan was either taken prisoner, or had been forced to do homage to the Prince Royal; every strong place had been taken by siege, assault, or capitulation, and the country reduced to a desert by pillage, famine, and disease. The military fame and character of his royal highness were fairly established, though at a fearful price, insomuch that, had the king at this time taken leave of the world and of his throne, there is every probability that the prince would have succeeded to it without a struggle.

Not content, however, with his successes in Persian Khorasan, Abbas Meerza resolved to inflict a severe blow upon the Toorkomans of the neighbouring desert, and to annex the city and dependencies of Herât to the crown of Persia; or, at least, to force its master to do him homage, and pay him tribute. The first he effected by a masterly attack upon Serrakhs, a town inhabited by Toorkomans, lying upon the skirts of the Moorghab hills, to the eastward of Mushed, and which he took by assault. This was an enterprize which it appears the prince had long kept in view. Several years before this period, in a familiar conversation with our friend Macneil, when his highness was indulging in many a speculation regarding his future prospects and projects, and among other subjects was adverting to the condition of Khorasan, and the Toorkoman practice of man-stealing and selling, he said, "There is a place called Serrakhs, where a great number of these people dwell, and which they have made a depôt for their booty. Some day or other, *Inshallah!* I will go and capture

it, and you shall go with me, and we shall get great plunder; for I have good information about the place, and they say there are whole sacks and *khoorgeens* full of gold, and precious stones, and bales of shawls and rich stuffs, the plunder of many caravans—now, remember: it is a bargain; we go there together." Macneil laughed, and soon forgot the whole affair.

In November 1832, Macneil, having gone on duty to Khorasan, joined the army of the prince at Akderbund, about two days' march from Serrakhs, from the capture of which place they were just returning. On waiting on the prince, almost the first words with which he was saluted by his royal highness were, "Oh, what a lazy fellow you are! here have I been waiting three days at Serrakhs to keep my word with you, and not a bit of you made your appearance. Have you forgot our bargain? Do not you remember that on such a night we spoke about this country, and I said then that I would take Serrakhs, and you should go with me, and that we should have lots of plunder: what became of you? why did you not come in time?" And to be sure his royal highness made his words good; and his attack on this devoted place was managed with admirable skill and judgment. After the fall of Cochoon, the stronghold of my old friend Reza Koolee Khan, his royal highness made some marches from Mushed, suffering it to be thought by every one that he meant to march against Mahomed Khan Karâwee, at Toorbut; when, suddenly turning sharp to the left, he made for Serrakhs, which he found totally off its guard, and at once

invested it. Despising and rejecting an offer of one hundred and fifty thousand and then of two hundred thousand tomauns of ransom, which was offered by the inhabitants, (a refusal to which the extreme scarcity of cash in his treasury at the time gives a high value,) he resolved, cost what it might, to root out this nest of man-stealers. The place was invested, breached, stormed, and taken in little more than a day. The town was given up to plunder, and afterwards reduced to ashes. Many of its inhabitants were slaughtered, and three thousand of the remainder were carried off as prisoners. The booty was enormous—incalculable—perhaps greater than in any capture of recent times. There were literally, as the prince had said, whole *khoorgeens* (sacks) of gold, and piles of rich goods of every sort and kind. It was a true robbers' den, upon an immense scale: the amount of specie alone has been vaguely estimated at from three to four hundred thousand pounds sterling, and the greater part of this fell into the hands of the soldiery.

During the whole of these campaigns the Prince Royal appears to have displayed infinitely more talent and ability, more acuteness of observation and soundness of judgment, than any one had previously given him credit for. Most of the grand *coups* that were struck during the war were undertaken by his royal highness in direct variance with the opinions of his ministers and council, whose propositions were of a far more timid and vacillating nature than suited the energetic system of the prince; and the address with which he managed to keep the army in good humour, and to maintain

discipline under circumstances of extreme privation and distress,—nay, even to quiet their murmurs when want of pay or food had induced them to take sanctuary at Mushed, impressed every one who was witness of the facts with a high opinion of his sagacity and military talents, as well as of his vigour and promptitude of action.

But the hardships and exposure of these campaigns increased a complaint with which his royal highness had for some years been afflicted; and I believe it was while thus weakened in mind as well as body, that he permitted the ambitious and avaricious councils of his minister, the Kaymookam, to outweigh the more wholesome advice of his English friends, and he proceeded to reduce Herât. Considerable progress had been made towards the attainment of this object, when the illness of his royal highness increased so much as to confine him entirely to his couch, and to leave no doubt that his end was at hand. But the approach of death seems to have had no terrors for the prince; on the contrary, that hour which tries the stoutest mind appears to have proved that of his royal highness to have been nowise deficient in firmness. Seeing his minister and principal officers collected about his couch, he said to them, "Why do ye all stand here gazing on a corse?—leave me, and go to my son: he is now your master; guide, assist, and advise him as ye have hitherto done me!" and he actually forced them to leave him to the cares of his mere domestic attendants.

The death of the prince, which occurred before operations against Herât were complete, occasioned

an immediate change on the face of affairs. The Kaymookam, a minister of little political firmness and no personal courage, immediately took the part of retreating; a loose arrangement was made with Camrân Meerza for the payment of the stipulated tribute, and the army with Mahomed Meerza returned to Mushed, where the prince has since remained inactive.

This minister, the Kaymookam, so frequently mentioned, was the son of a very eminent person named Meerza Buzoorg, who also, under the title of Kaymookam, held the situation of vizier and most confidential adviser of the late Prince Royal; indeed, while he lived, the government of Azerbijan was conducted almost entirely by him. That person, at an advanced age, was swept off in 1822 during the first visit of cholera in Persia, and while I was at Tabreez; and he was succeeded by his son Meerza Abool-Cossim, the present Kaymookam, on whom the king bestowed the title as well as the office of his father. He has the reputation of being an acute and able man, but imperious and jealous of the smallest interference from others; and it is said he often disgusted the late Prince Royal by an appearance of, and in fact an attempt at domination, which no absolute prince of even common abilities could brook. The consequence was frequent quarrels, which however, from a sense of mutual convenience if not of dependence, were as often made up; and they went on like cat and dog, snarling and spitting, but never coming to extremities until the end of his master's life, when, as a matter of course, the son fell into the minister's hands: as a matter of course,

too, the ambitious and crafty minister did not let slip so fine an opportunity of making a wide stride towards absolute power, as was afforded by the accession of a young and comparatively inexperienced prince to the government and position in which he himself had so long struggled to hold the first place in real power and influence. The prince, we are told, is nothing — the minister everything. To use the phrase of a person who has just come from Khorasan, and saw how matters are going on, "The prince dares not get his clothes without the Kaymookam's leave."

It is not to be wondered at that a man so ambitious and so able, occupying a position so commanding about the person of the heir presumptive to the throne, should be an object of suspicion and jealousy to the majority of both ministers and courtiers about the court of Tehran; and such is actually the case. The Kaymookam has few friends here, and a multitude of enemies. Of these, the principal are the Ausef-u-dowlut, who being maternal uncle to the prince, and a most subtile and unprincipled as well as a most ambitious man, views with extreme uneasiness the ascendancy of any other person where he himself seeks to rule. Another is the Ameen-u-dowlut, who in the failing health of the king prognosticates his own overthrow and the Kaymookam's exaltation, so soon as his old master shall depart this life, and Mahomed Meerza succeed to the throne.

The Zil-e-Sooltaun, the prince's full paternal uncle, also opposes the Kaymookam, because he is the chief support, as he believes, of his nephew, whom he (the

Zil) wishes to supplant as future king: and thus, and from various other causes which it would be tedious to explain, there is, throughout the whole court and *employés* at Tehran, a decidedly hostile feeling towards Mahomed Meerza as heir to the throne of his grandfather.

Under these circumstances, it is scarcely marvellous that the Kaymookam should hesitate to come himself to court, or permit his charge to leave Khorasan, where he has an army to support his measures, and resources sufficient to maintain himself, however inadequate they might possibly be for enabling him to play the higher game. But in fact the Kaymookam has other reasons for remaining in Khorasan. Every one who has arrived from that province, gives a most lamentable account of its condition. Exhausted by a three years' scarcity and consequent mortality of the inhabitants, it can furnish neither money nor food, so that the troops are starving—bread and barley are at unheard-of prices, and thus not only are the people ready everywhere to break out in revolt, but the discontent of the troops is so great, that if they were relieved from the restraint imposed by the presence of the prince and his minister, there is room to fear that the army itself might become totally disorganized. On the other hand, the Toorkomans of the Desert, backed by the Oozbecks of Khyvah and Bockhara, are recommencing their *chuppows*, which during the life of the Prince Royal, and after his successes at Serrakhs, had been discontinued; and thus, although for many reasons it is desirable that either prince or minister should repair to court according to the

king's wish, it appears impossible that either can do so, at all events, until the new corn shall come in, and enable them to feed the troops and re-establish fitting discipline. Thus, too, as for various reasons my movements eastward must depend upon theirs, it appears probable that I may be detained yet some time longer in this place. I am to have an audience of his majesty to-morrow, in order to be in a condition to start fair, with the royal permission, whenever the fitting time may come.

In the mean time, I do not neglect any means in my power of rendering myself more fit for the duties I have to perform. I find myself every day regaining lost ground in the language; and to aid me further, I have got an old Moollah, a most simple-minded worthy creature, who has had several Europeans through his hands, to read with me, and, what is better, to converse with me; and you would be mightily amused with his conversation at times. You know that the Orientals in general, and particularly the learned among them, love to make use of little stories, and apophthegms, and parabolic illustrations in explaining their ideas, in giving lessons on moral subjects, or in inculcating the precepts or practice of virtue. Yesterday, when old Moollah Sâleh came in, he found me fashioning the mould of a little article in wax, which I wished to have made in silver. Long did he look and admire, but never said a word, till at length I told him what it was intended for. "See now," said he, with a most triumphant smile,—"see what a good thing is patience! —ten times was I on the point of asking you what you were about, but I restrained myself, saying

inwardly time will show;—and, behold, now you have told me yourself. This is just like the story of *Huzrut-e-Daood* and *Locman:* do you know it?" Of course I said no, and as you may be ignorant even of whom these personages were, I will tell you that *Huzrut-e-Daood* is no less a personage than King David the son of Jessé, and that Locman is their Esop, a personage brought in as the half wit, half sage, in all their fables and tales, and on all occasions, and some of them, like this, are very singular ones. "Locman," said the Moollah, "was a particular friend of King David's, and came in one day while he was employed in making a suit of link-armour. David, you know, was one of the best armourers that ever existed: well, Locman saw him twisting and turning the metal, and fashioning rings and links, and joining them together; and much he longed to know what all this was for. At length Huzrut-e-Daood finished his work, and having put on the coat-of-mail, he said to Locman, 'Do you see this armour? is it not an excellent thing? how well it defends a man in the day of battle!"—'Ay,' replied Locman, 'but do you see how excellent a thing is patience?—here have I been for days watching what you were about, and never asked what it might be for, and, lo! now you have told it me yourself!'"

You may perhaps, like me, fail of appreciating the exact value of such self-control in the case in question; but if you had lived in Persia for some time you could have no doubt as to the indispensability of possessing, and the necessity of daily and hourly exercising, the said most excellent virtue of patience.

2nd April.—Went according to appointment, after breakfast, to the *Durkhaneh*, as it is called *par excellence*—namely, the gate of the royal dwelling. When we arrived, it was understood that the Ausef and Ameen-u-dowlut were in the presence; so until his majesty should be ready to receive us, we took a seat in the office of the keeper of the wardrobe, where soon after entered the Ameen, and the Moonshee-ul-momalic, (the chief secretary, who frames and registers all firmauns,) a coarse-looking, ill-favoured personage as need be, with a number of *Moostofees* and Meerzas, who took their seats and began forthwith to transact business. On looking round, I could not help admiring the scene that was passing, and contrasting mentally this office of the Prime Minister of Persia with the spectacle afforded by that of one of the secretaries of state, or first lord of the treasury, in Downing Street. Assuredly it was a sight that would have astonished a European; and I wished, as I have often done, that I could stamp upon paper the image impressed upon the retina, that you might see it as in a camera obscura; for to describe it, so as to convey a just impression of its various parts, is impossible; it depended too much on peculiarities of country and costume, and fugitive traits of character, to be rendered into language.

The room was a miserably poor apartment, of some fifteen or sixteen feet square, with shattered windows, loaded with cobwebs and dust, situated at one side of a most blackguard-looking court, to which entrance was only to be won through the immundicities of a passage "to match." At the

upper window sat the Ameen, in his scarlet cloak and shawl cap of state, just as he came from the king's presence, with Macneil seated opposite him in his full uniform. Next the Ameen was the Moonshee-ul-Momalic, and, with some other functionaries intervening between them, a certain Meerza Asker, nicknamed *Beenee-kej*, or *twisted nose*, a clever ugly dog, who, it is said, having his own nose crooked, is trying to put that of the Ameen-u-dowlut out of joint with the king by intrigues and misrepresentations. Below him sat Zohrab Khan, *Sundookdar*, or master of the wardrobe; and, to balance all these, on the side opposite the window were ranged a thick row of personages, each more ill-looking and blackguard than another. I sat next Macneil, and below me were ranged another squad, all in some way or other employed in, or connected with, business. In short, the room was filled in a moment, and the court below was nearly as much crammed with people, all eager about some affair or another.

The Ameen soon set the secretaries and writers to work, and four or five of them sitting down upon their heels in front of the numud, on which the great people were ranged, began to scribble away upon papers on the palms of their hands, which, as soon as finished, they gave to be read over and sealed. It was matter of no small interest, too, to listen to the contents of these papers. Many of them related to subjects of great importance, and provinces or districts of vast extent, or involved transactions of much consequence, which were "familiar as household words" in the mouths of all around

us; so that, in spite of the homely appearance of the place and people, one felt oneself really in an atmosphere of state, dominion, and power.

At length a message came from Meerza Abul Hussun Khan, who, as minister for foreign affairs, attends to introduce foreigners into the royal presence, to say, that the Shah had inquired for us; so off we went, in our full-dress coats and red stockings, to have our eyes illumined by the effulgent beams of royalty. Introductions to the King of Persia are now so common as to be scarce worth describing; yet I fancy you would scarcely forgive me, if I were to pass over the interview in utter silence; but I will be as little tedious as possible.

Leaving the apartment we had been sitting in by a mean gateway, surmounted by a ruinous "balla khaneh," we arrived by a tortuous passage at a garden, in the same style as those without. A *Koolla Feringhee*, or octagonal building, of sun-dried brick, occupies the centre of this garden; and at the upper end there is another, containing a pretty large hall and some smaller apartments, called the "Imarut-e-Bilour," I suppose from the nature of its finishing and contents; for walls and roof are completely inlaid with mirrors and gold painting, and enamel-work, which has a very brilliant effect, though far from so solid and imperial-looking as that of many palaces in India, which are built of marble, and adorned with rich mosaic, and gold and azure flowers. However, the thing was pretty enough; and the floor, on the rich carpets of which were ranged a multitude of splendid glass-ware, vases, lustres, and a thousand nondescript articles of cut

crystal, made a glittering though a fragile show; yet, what a strange semi-barbarous idea to turn the floor of a regal hall of audience into a cut crystal warehouse!

In the midst of all this finery, at the upper end of one of the great windows, that occupied the whole front of the hall, and opened on the garden, supported by a pile of silk cushions, sat Futeh Allee Shah; and, spite of his age and rank, there was a frivolity in the whole affair and its machinery that one could not help feeling extremely ridiculous. He looked like a spoiled child, sitting amidst its playthings; and the respect which the venerable appearance and station of the monarch would unquestionably have commanded was diminished by the accessories intended to increase them. But we are discussing his appearance before making our approaches; and this was done in a solemnity of form which, to strangers, must add to the absurdity of the whole proceeding. Our fat leader, the minister for foreign affairs, led us round the garden, until we came in sight of the Shah, whom, however, I could not discern amidst the glittering frippery where he was seated. We bowed, advanced halfway up the walk—bowed again—left our slippers, and advanced in our red stockings to the corner: stopped;—bowed again—then, at some signal, which was not very perceptible, advanced to the steps leading to the hall,—ascended them deliberately,—bowed at him from the passage,—entered; walked to the corner diagonally opposite to the window corner; bowed again, and then stood erect in the presence of Futeh Allee Shah.

The King then pronounced the *Khoosh Amcdeed*, or welcome, to Macneil — asked who I was, said some civil thing in return to the reply, and there matters stopped, until the minister took up the word and told his majesty that I had visited and travelled in Irân before, and had written a book about it, in which *I had praised the country highly*. "Aha!" said his majesty, pricking up his ears, "has he so? He seems a fine young man."—"Oh, very much so! *kibleh-âlum*,—very wise, prudent, accomplished," and so forth. Upon which the "Point of the world's adoration" deigned to ask where and when I was going; and on being informed that I proposed proceeding to Khorasan, to pay my respects to Mahomed Meerza, and see the wonders of the land, his majesty was graciously pleased to order that a suitable person should be provided to accompany me. His majesty then made inquiries respecting the officers that had arrived; their ages, ranks, qualifications, &c.; and on being informed, and a hope expressed that his majesty would find them, in all respects, such as would give satisfaction and do credit to their country, the King said, "Certainly; there can be no doubt of that; they are Englishmen, and all the English are good." There were some slight remarks hazarded by the minister upon other topics, but the presence of the Ausef, who had planted himself, like a post, immovable at the bottom of the room, acted as a damper on his majesty, and the audience was terminated by the King calling for his calleeoon, and soon after giving us the nod of dismissal.

This day my friend Bonham left us, to return to

Tabreez, and I parted with him with much regret. We had made a long and perilous journey together, under circumstances calculated to try both temper and fortitude; and never in any case did I see either the one or the other fail. Many a hard mile we rode side by side, and many a weary hour we spent in snow, and storm, and darkness; and I must say, that the equanimity and good humour of my companion were a support and relief at all times, and often when but for that I should have been comfortless enough. I please myself with the thought that we parted with mutual good wishes and esteem.

3rd April.—Went this morning to call upon Aga Bahram, the King's favourite, whom we found sitting in deshabille in a plain apartment looking into a garden, with half-a-dozen other persons, amusing himself with shooting at sparrows and other small birds with a pellet-bow. Among the company was Nuzzur Allee Khan, an Affshâr nobleman of Ooroomia, who on some former occasion had accompanied a Persian embassy to Paris, had seen Napoleon and his fine army, with the "*jolies dames*" of the French capital, of all of whom he spoke in terms of rapturous reminiscence. He had learned a little French, which he blattered out intermingled with Persian; could still roar a stave of a French *chanson*, especially when half-seas over, a state he is very apt to get into when there is good liquor to be had; and he had seen much of Persian life, which he is wont to describe in a string of tales, anecdotes, and adventures, often more amusing and wonderful than true. Isfundiar Khan, a Georgian

by birth, and formerly Topechee Bashee, was another; and Mahomed Hoossein Khan, who commands a *dustch*, or corps of troops, from Feerozekoh, a third. We found the most of them seated on chairs, English fashion—a proof, if you will, of the advancement of innovation, if not of civilization. The Aga's occupation was an odd one, you will say; but his expertness both with the pellet-bow and with the rifle, is wonderful. Perhaps at the former he has no equal. When in practice, he would place before him on the ground a dozen or two of walnuts, some twelve or fifteen paces distant, and knock them off one after another, calling out which he meant to aim at before shooting. He tried this feat for our amusement, and though not in good practice, he made some wonderful shots; some of the best were at single walnuts, put upon a stick some ten or twelve inches high, which he seldom missed. The sparrows were more difficult subjects, as not only did they alight much further off, but kept constantly in motion, as if they suspected mischief.

With the rifle the Aga is also first rate, although the old king is almost, if not quite, his equal. Macneil put him in mind of a shot he had once made at an egg placed upon a mound of earth, and at so great a distance that he could but just see it. He missed it, I think, the first two shots, one hitting on the one side, the other on the other, from some error in not allowing for the wind, but broke it to shivers the third. The Aga's eyes glistened at the recollection, and he produced immediately the gun with which it was done. But

two feats of the Shah were mentioned which were nearly as capital. Macneil was several years ago attending his majesty upon a hunting expedition, when some antelopes were seen; and, as usual, means were taken to drive them towards the king, who dismounted in order to shoot at them. They took a course rather wide, however; and his majesty, in order to have a chance of a shot, had to run pretty smartly round a hillock, behind which they were passing. Just as they came in sight, about two hundred paces off, the king looked round to see who might be near, and observing none but Macneil, who chanced to be pretty close, he called out, "Mark the buck," threw his long beard with the left hand out of the way, over the left shoulder, and levelled his rifle with the speed of thought—crack went the shot, and down came the fine black buck antelope, tumbling over and over, shot through the body while at full speed. Another time his majesty, while sitting one day in the garden of the Tucht-e-Kadjar, with a loaded rifle in his hand, which he was examining, chanced to observe a small bird alight on the very summit of a tree, some ninety or one hundred yards' distance; he instantly levelled, fired, and knocked the poor little creature's head clean off. These might be chance shots, but such chances are frequent with the Shah.

To return to the Aga. I told you, I believe, that he is one of the best horsemen in Persia, and he prides himself moreover in having some of the very best horses procurable. Some of these he produced for our pleasure; and one of them, an Arabian, was certainly one of the most beautiful

creatures I ever saw; it was a treat to look upon it; and he mentioned several performances of his steeds, which were confirmed to me from other quarters, and which would make the knowing ones of the turf in England stare. The narrative of these exploits naturally brought on a conversation on such matters, and I was led to remark how disappointed I had been at seeing so little of horsemanship and feats of arms practised in the country now, so different from heretofore—no *jereed-bazee* or *neiza-bazee* (jereed or spear exercise) to be seen, nor any display of troops or horsemen. On this, old Nuzzur Allee Khan and Isfundiar Khan broke out:—"No, to be sure you do not! who is there now to think of such matters—who is there that has *dil-o-dimagh*, heart or spirits for such things?" "Here am I," said Isfundiar Khan; "I used to keep a good horse, and could ride it too; but it is twelve or thirteen years since I have gone outside the city walls; what is there to tempt me out?—how am I likely to ride now?—and such is the case with all of us; all the good *nowkers* (servants, military in particular) have grown old and useless." "But how is that?" said I; "this is the same Irân; these are men of the same stock that, in the time of Nader, conquered half of Asia!" "Ay," replied the Khan, shaking his head in the peculiar Persian manner, "you see what Irânees can do; you see where Nader got to: twelve years did he enjoy the throne, and in these he went to India and took Shahjehanabad; to Khivah, to Bockhara, to Goorjistan." "Ay," returned I, "the Toorkomans did not dare to make their chappows then; there were no *ala-*

mâns in those days." "The Toorkomans! *tuh-bei-resh-ish!* I spit on their beards! what were they? *Ryotee mekeerdund*, they were obedient vassals then. Yes," continued he, after a pause, "it is the same people; we are the same men now as then; but —do you know what it is we want? it is leaders—officers." "What?" said I, laughing, "how can you say that there is a want of officers when you have the Khan there beside you," pointing to Nuzzur Allee Khan, who was writing some notes upon his knee. This opened the Khan's mouth with a long flourish about good services ill rewarded, and made the conversation, which had hitherto been confined to ourselves, general; for Nuzzur Allee's voice was none of the gentlest or lowest, especially when excited; and he repeated what had been said to the company at large, especially my observation, that there were now no good *nowkers* in Persia.

This set the Aga and Mahomed Hoossein Khan a-going, and the latter poured out a volley of words as rapid and unmanageable as the fire of his own *dusteh*, the purport of which was to point out the impossibility of making men good servants, or disposing them to the performance of great exploits, when their hearts are broken by disappointment and neglect, and their bodies are wasted by hunger and want. "Here am I for one," said he; "I have a thousand men: who ever thinks of furnishing them with arms or clothes? Not one of them has bread, far less powder or ball; and as to wages, they have forgot what they are; and yet they are expected to do service—to be good *nowkers!* Wullah! I have been feeding and clothing them at my own expense

till I can do so no longer. Allah-il-ullah! there are plenty of good soldiers to be had in Irân, if you will but pay them; but without pay or arms what can men do?" "Ay," said another, "there are plenty—a hundred—yes, three hundred good *nowkers*, if you want them." "Three hundred!" repeated the Aga contemptuously; "say two crores, if you need them." "Ay," replied another, "and yet they let the Russians eat up our money, and take our land from us! there are seven crores taken from the king's treasury, all to be devoured by these Russians and Abbas Meerza."

Thus did the galled place show itself, and the general detestation of the Russians, and dislike of Abbas Meerza, whom the court of Tehran accuse (very unjustly) of having been friendly to the Russians, break out, as all strong feelings do in Persia, into open and undisguised expression. It was obvious, too, that the new regulations emanating from the Azerbijan government, and particularly the institution of a regular army, were not at all to their taste; but if they disliked the *nizam*, or regular troops, their disgust at the innumerable host of royal descendants, who devour the produce of the country, was still more inveterate, and was expressed with at least equal strength and openness. "How well we are off for kings in Irân!" observed one: "we have enough of them at any rate!" "Yes, a hundred thousand of them to spare," replied another. "*Barik-illah*," exclaimed a third; "and well they govern it! great help at need are they! Dust on their heads!" "Do you know what Yermoloff said about them?" said Nuzzur Allee Khan; and then he told

a long story, the amount of which was, that General Yermoloff one day, in the presence of Abbas Meerza, having inquired what number of sons the king had, a person who stood by, intending to astonish the general by exaggeration, related a circumstance which was calculated to convey an idea that the multitude of them was immense. " Are there so many?" replied Yermoloff, with an expression of great disgust; " then, my shame be upon them all! Of what use are they, when they eat up all the country, yet cannot lend it any aid in the day of need."

" I once," continued the Khan, " went to pay my respects to the Prince of Mazunderân. He was seated in a great room with a multitude of his brothers, extending in two long rows from one end of the room to the other; and the subject of their discourse was the payment of so much good money to Russia, and the loss of so much good territory; and they asked one another why this should be suffered, and blustered about it not a little. ' May I be your sacrifice, princes,' said I; ' there is no reason why it should be endured. The remedy is simple. Here is a goodly assemblage of you Shahzadehs— *Mashallah!* near a hundred of you; praise be to God! Now, your slave would represent that you have only to raise a thousand good men apiece, and the thing is done. Enough! No need to give Russia any more money then; you may set Paskeyitch and all his troops at defiance, or fight him if he dares to stand.' " Why,' said Mahomed Koolee Meerza (of Mazunderan,) ' I have already given the Shah much more than one thousand; I have given seven thousand

men.' 'Yes, prince,' returned I, 'and of a pretty sort they were! What did they do?'" But here the Aga interrupted the discourse by snatching up his bow to shoot at a bird. Nuzzer Allee-khan had blundered on tender ground; for he did not know Mahomed Hoossein Khan, whose Feeroze-kohees were in that very corps of seven thousand, against whom the drift of his story was about to bear; and the Khan himself, who had been getting fidgetty from the very commencement of the tale, was just about to explode, when the Aga, with excellent tact, broke off the conversation. Indeed, a moment longer and it would have been too late; for the peppery little commander of the Feeroze-kohees had already got flushed with anger; and his fiery eyes, and his position, leaning forward with his hands on the arms of his chair, as if ready to fly at the maligner of his men, showed that in another instant he would have been off like a sky-rocket. Quiet was soon restored, and the discourse flowed off into other channels; but what I have given you may serve to show not only the feelings of people here, but the openness with which they are uttered. Here was a company of *employés*, and a favourite of the king's, who, the moment the lead was given them, broke out open-mouthed against the weak yet grasping sway of the royal house, and the ruin which their conduct had entailed upon the country.

7th April.—A fine fresh spring-like day.—The whole party, civilians, officers, sergeants, and all, rode out, a motley but joyous crew, to the ruins of Rhê, about three or four miles distant from Tehran, to see the remains of this ancient city, the Rages of the Book

of Tobit and—to look for a hare. In the latter object we failed. The two last severe winters have destroyed most of the game in this part of the country. In the former we succeeded of course, and had, besides, a delightful ride; the air perfectly delicious; the breeze so exhilarating, that disappointment, even in sport, could not disturb the equanimity of the party.

We ascended a ridge, which appears to have been part of the citadel, and which was crowned by a wall; from hence we had a perfect view of the whole site of Rhê, the extent of which is considerable—probably six miles in circuit; but never, perhaps, were ruins with less to satisfy the appetite of the antiquary. Nothing is seen but heaps of potsherds and rubbish, crumbled into small fragments, well dug over and excavated for all the fire-burnt bricks they might contain among the mud-walls and towers of, probably, many cities; for who among the amorphous masses can now detect the old from the more recent? One half-executed sculpture of the Sassanian æra, cut on a tablet of rock, has been effaced to make room for an execrable bas-relief of the present king spearing a lion; and a half-ruined tower of fine brick-work points to the period of the Arab sway in Persia.

A piece of information was communicated yesterday on better grounds than that of mere report, which, whether true or false, may serve to give you some idea of the nature of Persian intrigue. The Ausef-u-dowlut, who has been using all his influence with the king to ruin his rival, the Kaymookam, has, it is asserted, made an offer to his majesty to

pay, within a certain time and for a certain purpose, a no less sum than a crore of tomauns—that is, about 250,000*l.* sterling, provided the Kaymookam be delivered over into his (the Ausef's) hands, with power to make him account for his disposal of the revenues of Azerbijan for a certain number of years back. It is added, that the king has consented to this bargain; which amounts, as a matter of course, to the utter ruin of, and, possibly, loss of life to the absent party. Now, could you imagine that such a transaction, so nefarious in all its parts and bearings, could be proposed by a minister *to*, and listened to *by*, a sovereign? Yet such affairs are of common occurrence at the Persian and Turkish, and, I believe, at all other Oriental courts. In the present instance, however, the consequences of the purposed intrigue are calculated to occasion the most disastrous consequences to Persia; for the Kaymookam, who, of course, will have the earliest intelligence of the intrigue against him, will assuredly keep in Khorasan, where he has power and means, and the inhabitants of which, together with the neighbouring countries, he might secretly stir up to revolt, while preserving the appearance of doing all in his power to maintain order. Every man of any property would be alarmed, and the ultimate consequence might be the subversion of the present dynasty, which, as you have seen, is more feared than loved here. Yet all this is the Ausef prepared to risk in order to destroy a rival: as for the old king, he is too much blinded by his avarice to see or dread anything that leads to its gratification. This day there are further grounds for believing in the truth

of this reputed intrigue. The temptation of plucking the Kaymookam, who is reputed to be very rich, is too great to be resisted by the avaricious devil of his majesty.

10th April.—Unpleasant reports have arrived from Tabreez, of a popular tumult having occurred there, in which the mob first assaulted the Russian palace; but being repulsed there, they plundered the house of a certain Meerza Izaak, a relative of the Kaymookam, swearing that he was a Russian in his heart, and was implicated in a design to sell the country to Russia, on consideration of which they gutted his house. Some damage was done to the English palace, and a few caravanserais are said to have been plundered. This does not look much like devotion to Russia—on the part of the people, at least. In this place the dread and hatred felt for that power display themselves in many ways, and scarcely a day passes without some proof of it. This very day, a gentleman of the British mission received from a Kajer nobleman of the first influence, and holding a most important office, a note to this effect:—"I hear you have quarrelled with Mahomed Meerza; if so, I am your friend—at all events I will take the side you take; therefore, inform me of the facts and your intention, that I may prepare myself accordingly." The objection of this gentleman to Mahomed Meerza was, that he is considered to be in the hands of the Kaymookam, who has been supposed to lean to Russian interests.

This morning a room in the palace took fire, and before it could be extinguished about three thousand tomauns, or 1500*l.* worth of shawls, &c. were con-

sumed; and the flames had nearly reached a great *ambara*, or warehouse of oil, butter, sugar, and such combustibles, which, if once they had caught, would have been the means of consuming the greater part of the buildings of the interior—an ominous event in these ticklish times.

12th April. — This day the detachment of British officers were received by the Shah, w displayed a greater degree of state and pomp the occasion than had ever been the case on sim ones.

Fresh intrigues and rumours of intrigues. It is this day reported, *confidentially*, that the Ausef and the Kaymookam—the two mortal foes—the one of whom had *bought* the other from the Shah for the avowed purpose of annihilating him—these foes are said to have arranged their differences; the former consenting to act under the other, for securing the great object of Mahomed Meerza's accession to the throne, and certain other political objects. This information rests upon the authority of a certain Meerza Yussuff, the Sheikh-ul-islam of Hamadan, an independent and well-esteemed person, who obtained a sight of certain documents that left no doubt of the fact. This person related a curious anecdote of himself, which shows what liberties are sometimes taken in Persia even with the persons of princes. Being one day in the *mujlis* (assembly) of the Prince of Kermanshah, along with other princes and individuals of his friends, the prince mentioned his resolution of trying his fortune in an attempt for the throne. "You, prince!" exclaimed the Meerza; "never!" "No?" demanded the prince; "and why

not—why should I not try as well as others? I have as good a right as any one, and make the attempt I will." "*Gou mikhooreed:* you are eating dirt, prince," was the Meerza's elegant retort. "Do I?" replied the prince more temperately; "your own brother, Meerza Abool Cossim, (minister to the prince,) differs from you then; he advises me to make the attempt." "*Een hum gou mikhoorid:* then he also eats dirt," said the Meerza resolutely; upon which the patience of his auditors being at length exhausted, no doubt, they fell upon the poor man, and gave him a severe beating. "But," observed he, "were I to hear them talking such nonsense again, I would just make them the same answer."

This day I visited the son of my old friend, the Poet Laureate, and you would have been amused with the strangeness of his domicile; the holes and heaps of rubbish which we had to make our way through are not to be told—it was "up stairs, down stairs, to my lady's chamber," with a witness: for we got at last to the little room at the top of the house, which was the private reception chamber, or *khelwut*, of the poet, by scrambling almost over the roof of a neighbouring *hummaum*, and there was half a dozen ups and downs besides on the way. The room itself was true *Iraunee;* small, that is, not more than twelve feet square; its walls all cut into *tâkchehs*, or little niches, in which were stuck or thrust books, rose-water bottles, calleeoon gear, pistols, and daggers, small steel-bound Russian boxes, articles of dress, a gun and a sword in one corner, a pillow, with a *jubbah* or gown over it, in an-

other, curtains of Indian chintz, with patterns of huge trees, and a fine border round them, over each doorway, one of which opened upon the roof of another part of the building, and appeared to be the depository for the *recht-e-khwáb*, or bed-clothes. The opposite side of the room was divided into three large windows, looking out upon a garden. We were kindly received by the brother and son of my old friend, the latter of whom is not only a poet, like his father, but a great carver in wood and ivory; and he produced to us several very neat specimens of his handiwork.

13th April.—We had this day an opportunity of seeing a much choicer *khelwut*, or private cabinet, than that of the Poet Laureate. The king, it appears, has taken the resolution to make a journey to Koom, a city which contains many shrines of great sanctity, and where he intends his own old bones to repose when they shall have done their work. He goes partly for change of air, and to get rid of all sorts of business and intrigue; partly as a matter of religious observance, and partly, as I believe, to see his own tomb, which is in progress of erection there. This custom of princes and men of rank, choosing to build their own last dwellings, is common in the East; though I fear that the motive, if critically examined, would be found rather to flow from vanity and desire of posthumous distinction, than from a wholesome spirit of humiliation, or of discipline to the mind by an habitual contemplation of the inevitable doom of mankind. Well, during the period of the king's absence, as no business can be done, many of the officials of the court, not included in

the royal cortegé, take the opportunity to visit their villages and country retreats, as members of parliament in England do during a recess; and, among others, our friend, Meerza Abul Hussun Khan, takes his ponderous flight to a property of his, some thirty miles distant from the city, in the district of Vurumeen. To this place he has invited my friend Macneil, who is not sorry, in the vacation from business, to breathe a little fresher air; and I have been asked to accompany him. This is just what I like; for it is in the country, and in the domestic circle, so far as that can be penetrated in Persia, that you catch the real manners of the people. Accordingly, in the evening we went to see the Khan, and to make arrangements for our little excursion.

We found him in his khelwut, and a jewel of a place it is. Indeed the whole of his dwelling is the most perfect specimen of a Persian nobleman's house I know anywhere: larger ones I have often seen, although this is very extensive, but certainly none in such good order, or laid out with so much attention to convenience. The point in which it chiefly differs from others, however, is that there are no ruins in or about it—a very uncommon thing indeed here.

The entrance is by a respectable gateway, from a small bazar which belongs to the Khan, and you at once enter a good-sized court, surrounded as usual with buildings; that at the bottom containing a large dewan khaneh, or hall of reception. Of these courts there are more than I can remember, the entry from one to the other being through small doorways and narrow passages; but one of

them contains a hall which may really be called superb. It is from thirty to thirty-five feet long, by eighteen wide, with a recess on one side of some eight or ten feet more, and is adorned with carved work in plaster, painting, gilding, and all the customary Persian decorations, in a better style than usual; there are pictures, too, by native artists, painted on the walls,—rather fearful performances,—of Persian and European beauties in various shapes and attitudes, and several vile prints gaudily framed. These do not add much to the elegance of the place; but every one would admire the beauty of the windows, which are formed of coloured glass, cut into small pieces, and disposed in figures that appear just like the exquisitely arranged spectra exhibited by the kaleidescope. Nor would you, I am certain, be insensible to the richness and beauty of the carpets—real Herât, which are almost an inch thick, yet firm and smooth, and of the gayest and most pleasing colours.

The room to which, on this occasion, we were introduced, was far smaller, yet still more exquisite in its way. It was not more than fourteen feet square, or perhaps sixteen by fourteen. The walls were adorned with flowers of gold mingled with scarlet and blue upon a white ground, like the finest illuminated old MSS., and the corners and niches were filled with mirrors in the usual Persian taste. The worst part of it was the paintings, being vile attempts at nude or very slightly-clothed beauties, with fearful red cheeks, deadly black eyes, brows like twin bows of ebony, and all manner of extraordinary charms; but the painted windows,

the carpets and numuds, and the rich silk-covered down-stuffed pillows, with their slight muslin slips, would have put you wild with delight; and well did the portly figure of the Khan, in his comfortable deshabille, become the luxurious heap on which he sat embedded. Our business, so far as it referred to our intended excursion, was soon settled; and we agreed to be ready two days hence to ride with him to his village. The news from Khorasan are contradictory with regard to the movements of the prince and his minister, but all most unsatisfactory as to the state of the country—Toorkomans chappowing right and left. I must wait, at all events, until something is known as to the prince's intentions.

14th April.—This morning a party of the officers and myself went to see the *pehlewans* wrestle at the *Zórkhaneh*. Who?—what?—where?—I think I hear you say. Why, the pehlewans are the wrestlers or prize-fighters of Persia, and the *Zórkhaneh*, or "house of force," is the gymnasium or theatre where they exhibit; and a famous half-retired wrestler named Hussun Allee, who kept such a place, had given me, through one of my servants, an invitation to witness the performance.

You must know that in Persia there are a set of choice spirits who are amateurs in these sports, as young noblemen and gentlemen in England *used* to, rather than *do*, (for I believe, to the credit of the nation, the vile taste is gone out,) take delight in boxing matches, bear-baitings, and other such elegant exercises. In Persia it is not unusual for respectable persons to entertain *pehlewans* of their

own, and many have private zôrkhanehs, or theatres for athletic exercises, which they take pleasure in attending, and in attracting to them all the most celebrated prize-fighters in the country. Hussun Allee had been a great man in his day, and had now set up a theatre of his own upon speculation, and thither we went, piloted by my jeloodar. The place was like a bath, into which we plunged by a dark entrance, and after passing some "narrows," found ourselves in an octagonal vault under a dome supported by a circle of pillars. Within the circle was the cock-pit, or arena, which was boarded round to the height of six feet; between this and the outer wall, at a convenient height, were seats for the spectators. These were already full all but one, which, nicely carpeted, was reserved for us. The roof, which was plastered, was painted all over with fierce figures of pehlewans performing their various feats of strength; and strange shapes indeed were there, wonderful studies for an artist! the floor was of clay, I think, damped, so as not to be too hard for those who should fall.

When we entered we found the whole cock-pit filled with men, who proved to be the pehlewans themselves, and who immediately thereon cleared the place, threw off all their clothes, retaining only a pair of strong dark checked breeches with large thick patches on the knees, and began to exercise. This was done by wielding immense pairs of wooden clubs, somewhat of the shape and size of a pavier's rammer, and not very inferior in weight. These are called *meels*, and every pehlewan has a pair of greater or less weight, according to his bodily powers.

Stripped thus to the waists, these fellows exhibited very fine models of athletic forms—splendid chests—the muscles of back and shoulders finely developed; but I thought that in general they were deficient in that fall of the neck and gradation to the shoulders which is so essential to either masculine or feminine beauty. Some, however, were better formed in this respect; and one in particular, in the upper part of his body and the small proportion which his head bore to it, was perfectly Herculean. Their waists were extravagantly small, and the legs of almost every one were far inferior to the rest of their frames.

The meel exercise was admirably calculated both to show off and increase the powers of the upper parts of the body, and though perhaps not very striking in itself, it served to exercise their powers of muscle. They next exhibited certain feats of agility, throwing themselves at a bound on their hands, head-downmost and feet in the air, and this part of the exercise was accompanied with a good deal of foolish mummery; but all was intended to bring their joints and muscles into an active state for the great play that was to follow, just as you see a post-horse sometimes stiff at setting out, but getting into better action, and stepping out more freely as his muscles get heated and his joints more supple.

At length the wrestling began—it was of that sort which I have frequently seen in India, and, as I think, fully better performed there. I observed, that before commencing any feat each pehlewan made a profound obeisance to the place - as it were, to the *genius loci*,—bowing very low, and touching

first the ground and then his head with his right hand. He then bowed to the company, and then went up to and saluted the head pehlewan by touching his hand and head. Then, each pair before engaging saluted each other, in the same manner as prize-fighters at home shake hands before commencing action. They did the same when the contest was concluded. These pairs were matched by the master of the zôrkhaneh, either one or more at once in the cockpit; where, taking up their position opposite to each other, the body stooping and the arms protruded, as if in act to spring, they looked like rams ready to butt. Seeking their opportunity to close with advantage they started forward, and the great object of each seemed to be to seize the waistband of his antagonist's breeches; if they failed in this there was some severe grasping and grappling of the naked body, but never, as in English wrestling matches, where the combatants close voluntarily and hug one another, and then endeavour to trip or throw their antagonists. Here, when the advantage I have alluded to was gained, the fall of both parties very rapidly followed; but this was only the commencement of the real struggle. The art is so to fall that the back shall not touch the ground; this is the test of victory or defeat, and it is in the obstinate firmness with which the *pehlewan* who falls lowermost sticks with his face to the ground, resisting all the attempts of his opponent to move or turn him, whether by twisting his limbs or by sudden jerks, that his skill and address are known. And, assuredly, there were some very long and tough tustles. Now was seen the use of the knee-patches

and the stout waistbands, for they grovelled on all fours on the ground like frogs—that seems to be a favourite and strong position—and the other would get up behind and seize his opponent by the waist, by the shoulders, first by one leg and then another, twisting each limb till I expected it would snap; but all was endured, and the man generally stuck firm. When they wrestle before the Shah every atrocity is permitted; they may break legs or arms as they can, and seize by the most dangerous and sensitive parts of the body—all is fair, even if death be the consequence; but on common occasions they do not go to such serious extremities, contenting themselves with patient efforts of strength and skill alone. At this time one man, Jaffer Koolee, threw most of the field, receiving only two flings himself, both from the same person; but this man was also thrown in the sequel. On the whole, it was a thing worth seeing, but one which I should never think of going to witness often.—Adieu! my next will probably be commenced from the Khan's country house.

LETTER II.

Excursion to Meerza Abul Hassan Khan's Village. — Beggars. — Value of Water for irrigation. — Persian Agriculture. — The Khan at his Village. — Modes of Farming. — Ancient Cities. — Return to Tehran. — The Eede. — Return of the Shah from Koom, and entry into the Capital. — Persian Games. — Picnics. — A Persian Historian. — Royal Hymeals. — Scenes in the Maidaun. — The Princes. — The Shah's appearance. — Presentation of Gifts to his Majesty. — Dancers and Tumblers. — Wrestlers, Buffoons, &c.

Jafferabad. 15th April.

DEAR ——.

This morning at seven o'clock, having sent our baggage before, we accompanied the Khan from Tehran on the way to his property. We were attended by about a dozen of horsemen, who careered about, leaving us to our own honest host, who rode soberly on a soft sort of packsaddle, strapped on the back of a nice ambling nag. We could not have had a more delicious morning: the air was fresh and soft, and the green of the young corn was delightful to us, who had so long been confined to the mud walls of the city. In passing along for the first while we were assailed by crowds of beggars, who had stationed themselves at different points, aware, no doubt, of our intended march, and who were clamorous for relief. For these the Khan, well accustomed to the thing, had provided a parcel of small silver

coins, which he distributed as he went along, amidst the roar of mingled blessings and petitions, for nearly a fursung from the city.

Many of these were professional beggars from a particular tribe named Abbas Dousee, or rather *Dubbussee,* from the appellation of their founder, who is said to have been a tanner. Their place of abode is Ispahan, from whence they send out their members all over the country. All are professed beggars and impostors, practising to great perfection the arts and deceptions which our own beggars at home have recourse to, in order to excite pity. They assume the appearance of all sorts of ailments and bodily imperfections; and some go so far as to maim themselves, in order to carry on trade to better advantage.

One of these, lying on the road-side, as we advanced, arose a miserable cripple, with two club-feet turned almost behind. The Khan, however, was up to the trick, and called out to him to leave that nonsense and stand straight, or he would give him nothing; upon which, the cripple springing up at once, a straight and proper fellow came forward to receive the donation, which the Khan gave with a hearty laugh.

No sooner had he touched the coin than he disappeared, and diving into a hollow, ran like a lamplighter a-head for a quarter of a mile, and rapidly changing part of his rags, presented himself to us with a new contortion: he was recognized by several of the people; but the Khan, being in a charitable humour, and pleased with the fellow's

cleverness, threw him the other silver *abbas*. Another of these rascals came forward, personating a dumb man, uttering fearful inarticulate howlings; but his cure was effected with as much facility as that of the first: and among many scenes like these did we win our way to a place among the ruins of Rhê, named Chushmeh-Allee, from a fine fountain which rises under a limestone rock, and where the Khan had ordered breakfast to be prepared for us.

On our way, as we rode along, my attention was attracted by a stream which irrigates a large quantity of land, great part of which was now green with young corn. This stream is the produce of a *cannaut*, or artificial subterraneous canal, of great antiquity; it discharges a volume of water, which, as it rolled over a brick sluice, we could see to be about three feet broad, by five to six inches deep; and to give you an idea of the value of water in these parts, it lets, for irrigation, at a rate which amounts to about one thousand tomauns a-year, and is valued as saleable property at ten thousand tomauns, that is, ten years' purchase; as much, I should conjecture, as any property can well be worth in a country where law and government are so unsettled, and security consequently so imperfect. The fine fountain, at the well-head of which we made a capital breakfast, and which formerly must have been within the city of Rhê, now belongs to the neighbouring Imaun-Zadeh, or shrine of Shah Abdul-Azeem.

From hence we rode on pretty rapidly through a sheet of cultivation, which extends, as I was

informed, for twelve farsungs on each side of the city; and certainly, in the direction we went, villages are very frequent,—scarcely in any part were we a mile distant from some one or other. It is a fertile and a populous district; but when the whole is said to be cultivated, it by no means is to be understood that all is under *crop* at one time. The custom here is to divide the arable lands of a village into three parts, only one of which is ploughed down and sown each year. The other two lie fallow, and follow in rotation. The use of lime is unknown in these parts, nor is manure made use of, except close to cities, where the sweepings of stables, ashes, the dung of sheep and other animals, all mingled together, is used for melon and cucumber beds, and for the egg-plant, of which great quantities are used in Persia; but they seem to know little of the mode of composting manure. In the country, the only approach I have seen towards increasing the fertility of land by manure, is in the breaking down and spreading the earth of old walls, which, by having been long inhabited, appear to acquire some stimulating quality; perhaps it is only the stimulus of a little new soil to that which is exhausted. Thus, although the ground may be rich and the soil deep, they cannot afford to take from it more than one crop running, under such management.

A little way from the Khan's village, which is called Jafferabad, and is about twenty-four miles from the city, the party was met by the male population, who paid their respects to the Khan

with much apparent cordiality; and a very decent peasantry they seemed. A sheep or two were decapitated by the side of the path as we rode into the village, according to the Persian fashion of welcoming a great man, so that the poor head was thrown almost under our horses' feet; and there was a glorious clamour of women and children, all very right and pleasant, as the Khan rode through it to his own munzil or dwelling. You are not to suppose that these village homes of great men, are by any means splendid affairs. They are built like the houses of the ryots, of clay and chopped straw, edged inside perhaps with plaster, but not even whitewashed. These courtier Khans, however, like the excitement of what they call *roughing* it, in the country, in these humble dwellings, where comfortable carpets, and numuds, and cushions, beds as good as they have at their city palaces, and plenty of the best eatables—ay, and sometimes of drinkables, leave them truly little to wish for. The dwelling of the Khan in this instance, which occupied considerable part of a square walled inclosure, that might serve as a temporary fortification, and which contains his own especial establishment, was assuredly deficient in none of these appliances to comfort. It was quite distinct from the village, which has no walls.

In the evening, we accompanied our host through his garden, and round the village; looked at his improvements, effected or in progress; discussed, or heard him explain, those he projected; and, in short, went through the whole course which one has to undergo on a visit to some country laird

who farms his own property. One thing was well worth seeing—it was a splendid Oriental plane-tree, which, having been pollarded by some sacrilegious hand in its youth, spread out its branches on all sides with great regularity and beauty; its trunk must have been seven or eight feet in diameter a good way above the ground. A small clay platform had been built about it, where a carpet can be spread, and where, in hot weather, the Khan often passes the night. It was pleasant to see such a tree appreciated—perhaps it was not a less pleasant sight to see the Khan's fat portly figure moving patriarchally along his own grounds, followed by a *tail* surpassing that of any laird of Lochaber or Badenoch, or the Aird, in the *best* times of old, increasing at every step—giving every here and there a good word—a *Mashallah* to this one, a *Barikillah* to another, a good-natured scold to a third; but evidently quite at home among them, liking and well liked, and pointing out with very allowable pride all the perfections of his own village. It was altogether a satisfactory day; and after a capital dinner, *à la mode de Perse*, the *cuisine* of which, I assure you, leaves no room, in my estimation, for regretting that of France or England, and a bottle of bright old Madeira from the Khan's own stores, we went to our comfortable beds, and the repose earned by contented minds and plenty of wholesome exercise.

16th April.—This morning, after taking a dish of excellent tea—a custom which I recommend very earnestly to all travellers who do not prefer coffee—we mounted and followed the Khan over his estate,

which extends full one fursuk and a half, or about six miles from the village, till met in fact by the lands of other villages; for in these rich districts near the capital, such as Tehran, Khaur, Vuromeen, &c., there is not, as in most other places, a large proportion of *sahrah* or desert, but every village has its own land, as regularly meted out and as jealously preserved as those of any farm or estate in England. It was comfortable to see the whole of this land occupied and made use of, in a manner that marked the prosperity of the possessors. There is attached to this village of the Khan's a *cannaut*, larger than the one I noticed near Tehran, said, were it let, to be worth twelve to fifteen hundred tomauns a year; but the water is entirely employed in the cultivation of the village, and all that is in the Khan's hands. He told us that he had sowed seven hundred tomauns' worth of seed this year. The returns should be ten for one; and of this, he gives the *ryots* one fourth for cultivating it, he paying all expenses of seed, tools, land, and water; so that the ryots are just his hired servants, receiving as wages a clear fourth of all produce. In some cases one third is given to them, in others the proprietor finds land and water only, and the ryots find seed, tools, and labour, for which they receive one half the produce. For this village the Khan paid five thousand tomauns, and it may produce him about one thousand a year. In the evening we made an attempt to get to the ruins of an old city which was in sight, apparently close by, but it turned out to be further than we calculated on, and so we returned without accomplishing our object.

17th April.—We rose early this morning to accompany the Khan to another of his villages, named Soorchah, south of Jafferabad, and near the edge of the Salt desert. Our route lay through the ruins of another city, said to be the ancient Vuromeen. It is very difficult to judge of the antiquity of ruins in Persia, because in so dry a climate decay proceeds but slowly, and circumstances scarcely perceptible to the casual observer, may have lent to one building a greater degree of stability than to another. In this place there is obviously a blending of the structures of various ages: we find here tombs and buildings assimilating with those that are met with in Khorasan, at Bostam, Jorjaum, and at Saree in Mazunderan, and which have been estimated at about seven hundred years old: we find a mosque built by Sultaun Aboo Seyed, the son of Sultaun Mahomed Khodabundeh, in A. Hej. 720; and there are confused masses of clay-built ruins which may be of all or any age, besides what was called Kallah Ghebre, one of these singular forts of solid earth which are found in this and some districts to the eastward, and which I believe to be very ancient, that is, long before the æra of Mahometanism. In all probability, therefore, these ruins represent the relics of an ancient city. The gardens are still extensive, part of them being kept in order by the villagers who inhabit portions of the ruins; and part, allowed to run to waste, have become a jungle. Many ancient fruit-trees, and the hoary trunks of Oriental planes, hollowed by age and decay, but once of great magnitude, and now throwing out a fresh and vigorous growth of saplings from the hollow shells,

attest not only the age of the gardens where they grew, but present singularly venerable objects in themselves. It is remarkable that the inside of these shells bears a charred and blackened appearance, as if from the action of fire; a fact which would almost seem to bear testimony to the truth of that saying of the Persians with regard to this tree, namely, that whenever a *Chinár* (that is, an Oriental plane-tree) attains the age of three hundred years (I think), it is consumed by self-combustion.

On our approach to this new village, the Khan was received with the same acclamations and ceremonies as at the last, and the peasantry appeared equally respectable, though I believe the village is not so large; they are, I am told, in this part of the country, very much derived from the Arab stock. This evening we had an opportunity of observing one of the annoyances to which village proprietors in Persia are liable. The property of *cannauts* is held perfectly sacred, and the laws regarding them are well understood; but still they are sometimes transgressed like other rules. One of them binds the owner of any piece of land, whoever he may be, to leave uncultivated a strip *above the course of any cannaut*, because in irrigation the water employed would soak through the soil and damage the canal below, by making the earth of its roof fall down and fill it up. This dams up the water behind, which injures the whole course above. Now the ryots of a neighbouring village had committed a trespass of this very sort, and wroth indeed was the Khan as he rode along, and saw the expensive process which had been necessary to re-

pair the damage, and vehement were his imprecations and terms of abuse upon the fathers and mothers, and all the kith and kin of those who had done the foul deed, as he commanded their corn to be ploughed up and destroyed. This it seems is the only remedy and redress to be had in such cases, unless when the aggrieved party has very high interest, for otherwise no court of justice would interfere: now this village happens to belong to a person high in power, who is no friend to the Khan.

19th April.—Both yesterday and to-day I rode out, first alone and then in company with Macneil, to the old city, called by the natives *Erij*, which we had attempted to reach from Jafferabad. It is full eight miles from Soorchah, and strikingly showed how much in a level country the eye may be deceived in point of size and distance. We found it to be an oblong square, of 1500 paces long by 1380 or 1400 broad, having a gateway in each face, and forty round towers on the two longest ones. The wall appears to have been about twenty to twenty-four yards thick, and is now, where most perfect, about fifty feet high; but it has mouldered down from age and weather, so that the debris form a slope from its very crest, which is quite sharp, extending to a considerable distance beyond its original base. Both wall and towers have been built of sun-dried bricks, about fourteen inches square by three and a half thick, and there are arches in its substance between the towers, as if to allow of the materials to dry in building, for they do not appear to have been cells fit for habitations. These bricks exactly resemble

those that have been used in all the ancient buildings at Babylon; and at each gateway, and in several other spots on the sloping debris of the walls, we discovered masses of the burned and glazed-like lumps, resembling fire-scathed masonry, some of which is seen at the Birs-e-Nimrood. This would seem to fix the antiquity of the place as very remote; and, perhaps, the circumstance of the area within the walls being traversed by old cannauts,—many of which having become useless, others have been dug alongside them,—may tend, at least, to prove that it must have been very long totally deserted as a city. I do not know whether the fact of there being no great masses of pottery, or furnace-burned bricks, to be seen within the walls, nor any very great irregularity of surface, which is always the case in cities where clay has been taken to form many successions of houses, will be admitted as a proof presumptive against this one having ever been inhabited for any long period of time. Macneil leans to the opinion that this may have been the new Rhâges, or Apamea, built by Antiochus, and called so after his wife, but it is merely a surmise: the subject may be worth the attention of comparative geographers with more knowledge and better opportunities for inquiry than I possessed.

In hopes of finding a hare we had taken a brace of greyhounds to the ruins: we were unlucky both in this and in our pursuit after other game; but we started a couple of wolves, which went off, followed by the two greyhounds. Each of these went boldly up until they received the ominous snarl, on which they instantly stopped and came sneaking back, with their tails between their legs. No grey-

hound can possibly attack a wolf with any prospect of success.

On our return to the village we found letters awaiting us, letters from England, which were put in our hands as we dismounted. Alas! for the uncertainty of human happiness. * * *

In less than an hour we were again on horseback, and by sun-down reached the city gates, about thirty miles distant. It was a melancholy ride.

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20th April.—I am desirous of seeing everything that is going on; and hearing that the celebration of the *Eed-ul-koorbaun* was just going to take place, and a camel to be slain with great ceremony, I went to witness it this morning. It proved to be a poor affair, indeed. Nothing, perhaps, more strikingly marks the decline of prosperity in a nation, and the broken-hearted indifference of its people, than a neglect of all customary pomp in the trappings of state, and the celebration of national and religious festivals. In Tehran, the capital of the kingdom, where formerly all was bustle and movement, everything is now still and dead—there is neither glitter nor brilliance. The king, superannuated, like his dynasty and kingdom, cannot be plagued with pomp. We have seen the *Eed-e-noroze* put off for the first time in his reign, and the impression created by it has been far from favourable. At this *Eed-ul-koorbaun*, which is a solemn festival,—commemorative, as you perhaps may have heard, of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac,—it was customary for the king himself, or, in his default, for one of the elder princes, with a grand *cortegé* of the rest and their followers, to superintend the ceremony,

which consists of a procession to a particular appointed place, where a camel is provided as the sacrifice. The king, or elder prince, taking a knife, draws it across the animal's throat, which is then despatched and cut up upon the spot.

I have seen this festival held at Dehlee with great effect. The old king, and all the princes of his house and family, attended; and there was a great show of magnificently caparisoned elephants and camels, and horses and horsemen, and much glitter and show. The king gave the first wound to the victim, which was highly decked with flowers and finery; it was cut up immediately, and a part of the liver, as the choice morsel, being broiled upon the spot, was handed about to the most distinguished persons present. On the present occâsion not one of the princes attended, except Saheb-kerân Meerza, a son of his majesty indeed, and commander of the artillery,—Mashallah! though only about ten years of age; nor was he accompanied by a single person of distinction.

The first part of the show which issued from the gate was a parcel of ragamuffin musicians with kettle-drums, and horrid screeching pipes, who preceded a number of mules and horses, strangely caparisoned and painted, having tawdry trappings on, and gold and silver tinsel, with ostrich feathers on their heads; and along with these came sundry flags of silk, red, green, and scarlet, and some striped like shawls; and the animals were mounted and ridden to and fro at speed by the fellows who brought them. These, as I understood, were intended to carry away pieces of the unhappy camel

when he should be cut up: they were attended also by a number of dervishes, in their caps and patched robes. Next came six of the king's *kernechees*, or trumpeters, in their scarlet coats, with spears and horns; then came three or four led horses; then a couple of hundred *topechees*, or artillerymen, in two lines, forming a street, through which rushed thirty or forty furoshes with sticks, and gholaums with shields. After these came the little prince, gallantly dressed in a scarlet coat, well bedizened with embroidery of pearls and diamonds, his sword-belt to match, and having handsome diamond ornaments in his cap and on his breast, and a pretty little sabre depending from his side. He was mounted on a fine horse, which seemed to know its duty, and went steadily; and the little man sat upright and grave as a judge. Whatever else they may be taught, these scions of royalty, and, indeed, all youngsters of rank in Persia, learn early the forms and ceremonies of society, and to conduct themselves according to their rank and station.

Behind the prince, at due distance, came a rabble of horsemen, toffunchees, &c.; but scarcely was there a respectable-looking person amongst the whole, nor anything like even an affectation of much state; one or two horsemen ran a *maidaun* or two; and shook their spears or threw a jereed, as we moved along in a cloud of dust to the Nigaristan, a garden and palace of the king's, before the gates of which, upon a little height, the poor camel lay bound and ready, surrounded by a crowd of blackguards. Here the toffunchees formed their street afresh, through which the little prince came on,

holding a spear. A dervish, who was in attendance, uttered a long howling prayer over the beast, in which the name of Futeh Allee Shah was sonorously remarkable; and then, the spear being directed by the commandant of the party of topechees, the prince ran it into the poor creature, which was immediately despatched by a butcher, who was there for the purpose. A piece of its quivering flesh was instantly cut out and stuck upon the spear, which having received and shouldered, the prince turned his horse and rode off. The camel was then hewn in pieces, and a mighty scramble for the smallest morsel terminated the spectacle, which, on the whole, was so wretched and paltry, that I could not help saying to one of my servants, "*Pooch, pooch!*" —"shabby work, shabby work!" upon which an old *topechee*, who had overheard me, turning his head, exclaimed, "*Rast meggooed, pooch ust;*"—"he says the truth; it *is* a shabby affair."

24th April.—Just returned from seeing the king enter the city, on his return from Koom. Half the town went out as *peshwàz* to welcome his majesty; the other half lined the bazârs, to make a show upon his entrance: they had already taken their places at eleven o'clock, when we left the gates. It was a lively scene enough, but the king was still far distant. Laden mules indeed came in by threes and fours, and sometimes in strings of a dozen, with *yekdauns* and carpets, mingled with mounted men, many of them on miserable lame horses—no doubt pressed for the occasion; others on long, lank brutes, all legs and head, which seemed to complain that forage was scarce at Koom. Now and then a well-

mounted gholaum would spur past, and peish-khidmuts, led horses, and *tucht-rawans* urged on their way, shoving everything else aside, all with a supreme contempt of any sort of order; but still the "point of the world's adoration" was afar off.

As the principal group approached, better mounted horsemen came on, and the officers appointed to keep the ground came forward to make every one stand aloof; among these a brother of our friend, the minister for foreign affairs, came up, and assisted us with great *empressement* to obtain good places. A confused assemblage of horsemen of all ranks and distinctions, from whom were continually issuing individual pairs to skirmish and show off, were followed by those of more respectability—gholaum-peish-khidmuts, nassakchees, and personal attendants on his majesty; then a number of shatirs, or running footmen; and then, after a long vacant space, came Futeh Allee Shah himself, mounted on a horse, which no doubt might be possessed of most admirable qualities, but which most people would have guessed to be chosen rather for its quietness than its beauty; to me it seemed ewe-necked, leggy, and with poor quarters. His majesty wore the same orange-coloured *barounee*, or cloak, which he had on when I saw him in the *Imârut-e-Bilour*; on his arms were the bazu-bunds, containing his two celebrated diamonds. In his cap was a jewelled *jika*, and his grand black beard was as grand and well-trimmed as ever, but I think his person was somewhat less erect than it has been.

Behind, at due distance, came a group of princes and nobles, and among them, in a sky-blue velvet

riding-dress, rode the *Syf-oel-Moolk*, "sword of the state," the son of the Taj-u-dowlut, and Prince of Ispahan, the bridegroom of the nuptials that are about to take place. Our guide, the Khan's brother, not only pointed him out to our notice, but got a person to ride up and engage him in conversation, so as to separate him from the crowd, that we might get a good look at him, mounted as he was on the Shah's own horse, henna-stained all over belly and tail. A dense crowd of horsemen, gholaums, jeloodars, peish-khidmuts, and servants of all sorts, brought up the rear, crossing the road and country in a line at right angles to the line of march; from these it was that most of the skirmishers issued, and it was the liveliest part of the show. Proceeding as we did slowly, it was very pretty to see them, in pairs or singly, darting from the dark mass, "like lightning from the thunder-cloud," tearing across the plain, and firing guns and pistols at each other or at nothing at all, and showing off some very fine horses with great spirit and address. The key-kàj exercise, and that of the jereed, at all times exciting and lively, was now performed in very good style; and, altogether, there was something in the whole affair that approached to the glitter of old times.

Having neared the town, we dashed on, crossed the front of the great body, and tearing over some ploughed fields, galloped up to the gate which was soon to be entered by the old monarch. Here was the best part of the show; I never saw any Persian bazâr so gay. The whole,—and a great extent of it there is, from the Shah-Abdul-Azeem gate to the ark, or palace,—was dressed out not only with

the best of every ware the owner possessed, but with a multitudinous quantity of coloured paper ornaments and streamers, mingled with gold tinsel and foil, which hung over-head, and fluttering from frames along the door-posts and uprights of the shops, made a very glittering show, paltry and frail as it was in reality. Every sort of shop was appropriately adorned, and a very pretty sight of the kind they formed. But the best part of it, after all, was the multitude of happy human faces—happy and eager on the occasion at least. The Persians, whatever be their faults, are a light-hearted, good-humoured, easily-pleased people, who enter with amazing facility into all sorts of amusement, and whom the great want of glitter and gaiety which marks the present period, does not suit at all; thus they are ready to hail anything that promises a little relaxation, or affords an opportunity of enjoyment, as a spring long held back is to return to its natural position. All Tehran was agog; and beggars and fakeers, shopkeepers and labourers, Meerzas and Moostophees, Khans and *employes*, were bustling and buzzing about, and filling every alley that led to the bazârs, just as but a few minutes before they had spread over the open space before the walls. I should think that every soul, male and female, old and young, that Tehran could disgorge from its dwellings, was on this occasion in these public thoroughfares, crowding on each other's shoulders, and clustering on every knob and vantage ground they could hold on by. Had Satan himself thrown his net over the city, excluding the palace and the bazârs, I do believe

he would not have caught a single creature; and through this dense living mass did we force our way to the Maidaun within the palace.

Here, as yet, there were only preparations. The way from the Bazâr to the Ark-gate was lined with toffunchees, most of them dressed in their common garb; near the gate were ranged the *nassakchees* and *yessawuls*, in their scarlet cloaks and shawl-wound turbans; and close to it was seated the Zil-e-Sooltaun himself, as governor of the ark, in a similar dress. Indeed, so much did he resemble those around him, that we never remarked him, and were guilty of the indecorum of riding by without acknowledging his highness by a salute. In the square there was a street formed of toffunchees on one side, and topechees and serbaz on the other, stretching from the gate of entrance to that of the palace, keeping out an indiscriminate rabble on either hand. The ministers, in their court-dress, sat in a niche on one side of the palace-gate; and the Ameen-u-dowlut, on seeing us enter, sent to say, that being merely spectators, unless we desired to be unpleasantly conspicuous, we had best dismount. This we did of course, and had not stood long before a flourish of trumpets announced the royal approach.

The Shah came as before, preceded by gholaums and *shâters*, and followed by the same heterogeneous crowd of princes, nobles, and attendants, as on the march. He rode erect and slowly, turning his head gently to one side or other; the troops saluted,—ill enough; he entered the ark—and the show was over. There was no shouting, nor any bowing of the people, that I observed; and, on the whole, the

scene, though animated and amusing, could scarcely be called striking or impressive. The Persian garb, so much more sober than that of most other Oriental countries, is opposed to glitter or show; nor is the deficiency of colour and splendour in any degree compensated by regularity of arrangement, or the imposing appearance of numerous and well-disciplined troops.

In the evening we went to see the spear and jereed exercise, which is practised on every Thursday at the Shah-Abdool-Azeem gate. There were some very good performers; but I was more amused by watching the inferior games which were played by the crowd around. One of these was just a Persian edition of "Hunt the Slipper;" others there were which I could not understand at all; but there was one which consisted in tossing a boy in a blanket, and which appeared to me to involve no small degree of risk to the person principally concerned. They threw him up full ten feet above their heads, and it was laughable enough to the spectators to see the poor little fellow sprawling aloft, and coming down head over heels in the air; but I suspect it was poor amusement to him. They assured me that it was done with the boy's perfect consent; but certain remonstratory exclamations seemed to hint at a contrary tale, and they admitted that a leg or an arm was broken occasionally. Very pretty sport truly!

Another Persian amusement, which I have cause to remember well, as the first time I saw it my horse started so that he nearly threw me, consists in the use of a sort of swing, or rather round-about,

which I think is known at fairs in England. An upright frame, of two posts, is joined near the top by a cross beam, on which revolves a sort of machine like a large reel, or the barrel over which the rope of a well is made to move. On each bar of this reel is swung a sort of chair, the top of the back of which revolves, in its turn, round the bar; so that when the reel is turned round, each chair, to the amount of four or five, makes the circuit with it, preserving, however, its erect position, from the manner in which it is swung. In each of these chairs a person sits, and great is the glee that prevails as they mount and fall with the revolutions of the machine.

25th April.—It is a common thing here, as spring advances, to make little excursions and picnics to the neighbourhood of the town, especially to two villages, Shemroon and Khand, which are pleasant from their gardens and clear waters. In order to see the former, and to try how my own establishment worked before setting forth on my journey, I sent them out this morning, or rather last night, with orders to provide a breakfast for as many of our party as would go. It rained in the morning, which frightened two or three of the party; but the rest, with myself, proceeded to the place which my servants had chosen, and we were recompensed for our perseverance by its turning out a lovely day. My cook proved himself a capital *artiste*, and gave us a breakfast that would have almost thrown highland fare into the shade—for we had pillaws and stews, and kebaubs, and omelettes without end. There are two splendid chinars here, one I believe,

in point of girth, surpassing almost any other in the country, being about twenty-four English yards at three feet from the ground, and the other of great height and exceeding beauty;—they alone were worth going the distance to see, but we had a delicious day of roaming among the green gardens and heath-like hills around the village.

26th April. — I went this morning to call upon my friend Meerza Tuckee Alleabadee, who promises me several useful letters for my journey to Khorasan. I found him seated in conclave with several persons, among whom was a Kajar chief, Furz-Allee Khan, a relative of the king, Meerza Buzoorg, and a certain Moollah Hussun, all profound critics, and the subject of their conversation was the epitaph which the Meerza is writing for the king's tomb. The several sentences of this performance were separately brought before this board of critics and formally discussed. They all met with infinite commendation, and, after a while, there was a unanimous call for the Meerza to bring forth a certain history, which, it appears, he is employed in writing, of the reign of Futeh Allee Shah.

With a decent show of that becoming reluctance which authors consider it necessary to assume on such occasions, he complied with their wishes, and soon was prevailed on himself to recite a portion of the work, which is written in a sort of poetical prose. I am pretty well acquainted with the inflated style which the Persians admire, and the exaggerated praise which they bestow upon eminent living characters; but this "bate Bannacher," as Paddy would say. I had always conceived Futeh

Allee Shah to be a quiet sort of peaceable, money and women loving king, with no particularly great qualities or talents, and as little as might be of a warrior or conqueror. Judge of my surprise to find myself quite mistaken in this opinion, and to find the Shah a perfect fire-eater—a slayer of men and conqueror of states, at whose feet kings bowed, and whose dominion was spread far and near by the feats of his indomitable warriors. My mistake was confirmed by the impartial Furz-Allee Khan, who, after the most unmeasured and rapturous commendations of the work, summed up his eulogium by declaring, that the best of all was that, "By the head of the king,—by his own head, and by the death of his friend, no one could say there was one word of *lie* in the whole of it." I much regretted that my want of knowledge prevented me from feeling the delicacy of their criticisms, and partaking in the delight they evidently derived from discussing the merits of the composition.

27th April.—This morning, calling on the *Malek-ul-Shaêrâ*, (Poet Laureate,) who, like his father, is to give me letters to Khorasan, I heard some strange stories which gave rise at first to hope that the long-looked-for desideratum of geologists, the existence of human organic remains in secondary formations, was discovered in Persia. The first was a very obscure and confused story of a human skull having been found imbedded in a stone; I presume that it was a mistake or a fabrication, as I could trace no particulars regarding it of time, place, or fact. Another narrated, that in the second year of the present king's reign, in digging for the foundation of

a *boorj*, or tower, at the *Kasr-e-kajar*,* certain skulls were discovered of a size corresponding with that of those huge earthern vessels used by tailors in Persia for crimping and ironing their clothes upon, that is, I should say, about eighteen inches in diameter. The rest of the bones of the human skeleton were also said to have been found in company with the skulls, though not in such complete preservation; and the joints; such as neck, fingers, knees, vertebræ, &c., were clamped together with iron pins. The relater, who was the poet himself, declared that he went to the place and saw them, after which the whole were thrown into a hole and re-buried. Meerza Zein-ul-Abedeen, his uncle, mentioned another matter, which turned out to be more of a fact, although not exactly what the Meerza believed. Having drained a piece of stagnant water at or near Hamadan, some seven or eight years ago, for purposes of cultivation, he found there what he believed to be an enormous human skeleton, the teeth being full six inches long and thick in proportion, and the rest of the bones to match: a single tooth had been preserved to show the king, but he did not know what had become of the rest. Macneil however, who saw the tooth, states that it certainly was that of a graminivorous animal, instead of being that of a man; and if an elephant, it must have been a small one. But he mentioned a curious fact, namely, that poor Schultz, the German *savant*, who was murdered in the Hakkaree country, assured him, that having heard many tales of gigantic human remains being found in the country near Van in

* A royal palace near Tehran.

Koordistan, he had procured leave to open a tumulus or barrow there, and found in it a human skeleton, the cranium of which measured about three times the solid contents of the common run of human skulls. The whole skeleton was there, little disturbed, and the slight disturbance that existed had probably been occasioned in digging it up: the skull was sent to France.

28th April.—This day was the commencement of the rejoicings for the marriages at court, and particularly for that of the Syf-ool-Mook, to witness the pageantry of which all the English have received an invitation; we therefore went this afternoon to the great square before the palace, where the show is to take place, and on the wall of which a tent had been pitched for our accommodation. It was really a gay spectacle when we arrived; at first one could only distinguish a great crowd of people scattered over it, but in riding along you discovered that there was a double line or street of soldiers extending all the way from the entrance to the gate of the palace; on one side *serbaz*, on the other *toffunchees*; on the right, as you entered, there were about a dozen of guns, chiefly English, I think, in good order, attended by the proper complement of *topechees*, with all suitable apparatus; on the other side the whole maidaun was stuck full of the swivels of the camel artillery in somewhat irregular rows, each with its *zunboorukchee*, or swivel-man, standing by it, lintstock in hand; several other *teeps*, or battalions, were paraded in the square, and the crowd filled all unoccupied places, permitted as yet to go freely everywhere.

Notwithstanding the dust blown in our faces by

a fierce wind, which they somewhat strangely call *Sheheryar*, or "friend of the city," and which annoyed our eyes and faces exceedingly, we amused ourselves with gazing at the grotesque or gay figures that were flitting everywhere about.

But the Persian costume, as before observed, is not the liveliest; the colours used in dress are for the greater part sober—blues, browns, greens, greys, chiefly of *Neem-rungs*, or middle tints, as they are called; and for this reason a crowd in Persia does not make by any means so fine a show as one in India or Turkey, for example. But among these grave hues, a spot of crimson, bright yellow, orange, or sky-blue, tells with double force; and such there were in pretty fair abundance scattered among the crowd. The incidents were principally confined to the arrival of some Prince or Khan, whose *sowaree** made a little current of its own among the thickening throng; and as it approached you might distinguish the illustrious character by the handsome horse tossing its proud head, adorned with the fine Kajar bridle; by the rich shawl-dress worn by himself, or the glitter of his jewel-hilted poniard. Again, when the crowd pressed forward too familiarly on the space which even already was partly kept clear before and around the palace-gate, you might see a *furosh* or two start, stick in hand, from the mass that was gathered together, close to that sacred entrance, and dash among the populace, laying on to right and left, while the congregation fled and scattered before

* Train, attendance—*Scottice*, following.

them in all directions—only to return again the moment the backs of the officials were turned.

As the eye became familiarized with the moving scene, and took in its several features, it discovered first, about fifteen paces in front of the palace gateway, a large square stage erected over a tank which occupies that spot, and covered with carpets and numuds, upon which the dancers and musicians of the king were to exhibit. In the centre of the square, and half way between the gate of the palace and that of entrance to the square, just opposite, were two large guns, by which stood two standards, tall pikes, with square silken flags, bearing the insignia of Persia; and around these were clustered the officers of the serbaz corps, in their red frock coats, or *kabbas*, and those of the topechees, or artillery, in their blue ones, both plentifully adorned with gold lace, and bearing stars or orders indicative of their rank upon their breasts. Around the stage, and between it and the centre, stood numbers of *nassakchees* and *yessawuls*, (a sort of marshalsmen,) in their red *barounies* and shawl-wrapped caps, the latter having brâss ornaments in these caps to distinguish them. There were also the dark-looking body of furoshes — and there, too, stood the truculent-looking *furoshá-e-ghuzzub* — that is, furoshes of *wrath*, with their black scymetars of office, murderous weapons, girt over the right shoulder, and hanging close under the left arm, instead of at the waist, and a dagger stuck in their girdles; that dagger-knife with which they dig out the eyes and crop the ears, or noses, or tongues, of unhappy criminals, for they are the real ministers

of vengeance, the actual executioners who perform these bloody duties.

As the time for the Shah's appearance approached, you saw these fellows more actively employed in pressing back the crowd, and might hear the heavy blows which they rained on the heads and backs of all they reached; yet, on the whole, little mischief was done, for the Persian caps and skulls are stout, and the thick fur Kuleejehs and cloaks break the force of a good blow; and I must say for the furoshes, that they themselves oftener threatened than hit hard. But it is equally certain that their blows descended with great partiality; the miserable-looking blackguards, the ragged and tough wretches, that forced their way among the more decent of the community, received, and seemed to expect, their own share of hard knocks; but the stick seldom fell on the head of a well-dressed, or elderly, or, as the Persian term goes, a *mootshukhus* (*i. e.* respectable) person, and never upon women, of whom there was a monstrous proportion present; but of whom, as they were all closely covered with the *chadder*, or blue check envelope, worn by every female who appears in public, we saw nothing more than this forbidding costume. There was, too, an obvious system of favouritism. On the two huge guns on either side the gateway, guns cast by Nadir Shah and Lootf Allee Khan Zund, there was always a great cluster of people mounted, with four times as many aspirants for the exaltation as could possibly find sitting or standing room: those on the right hand being directly under us, we could see everything that passed; and I observed that one of the

furosh-e-ghuzzubs, who had undertaken to clear these guns, although he struck many individuals hard enough, yet singled out his men, permitting some to remain unmolested, and even directing others to climb up and occupy the vacated places. At all events so it was, that the guns were always crowded with gazers, every wheel-spoke had its hanger-on; the fellies were beaded with them, the long body of the gun exhibited a thick row a-straddle, and even the spaces between the gun and the wheels were studded as close as they could possibly stand. I wonder how the old rotten carriages did not crumble, under the weight, into the dust of which they seemed chiefly to consist.

After a while the drums and fifes struck up: the *nizàm*, as the regimental and regular serbaz are called, stood to their arms, formed and marched into their places to complete the square of troops; the rest rose from the sitting-posture they had assumed, and stood at "order arms." The zumboorekchees ranged themselves each by his swivel, which was pointed right up in the air; the topeechees took up their proper places at their guns, and you saw the space between the stage and the flagstaffs clearing, and the crowd dispersing to either side, until at length it formed a square, of which the side facing the palace was formed of nassekchees and yessawuls, together with the furoshes; that opposing its back to the palace being the stage, under and beside which still lingered many a one who had no business there: the other two sides were formed of the troops. But it was not yet complete—for now came Princes and Viziers, in their court dresses, who ranged them-

selves with the yessawuls in front of the window, from which his majesty was soon to look down upon this busy scene; and the Zil-e-Sooltaun, Sooleeman Meerza, the Ameen-u-dowlut, and the Ausef, came forward in rich garbs. That of the Zil was particularly conspicuous, consisting of a deep yellow satin or velvet *kubba*, over which was a scarlet *kuleejeh*, or vest, of a peculiar form, worn only by the royal family, and called a *koordee*, the back, shoulders, and breast of which were splendidly mailed with pearls and precious stones; a magnificent dagger was stuck in his exquisite shawl girdle, and a cimeter, adorned thickly with jewels, hung in an equally splendid belt by his side; and as he is an uncommonly fine-looking man, with a magnificent beard and noble features, in short, a capital specimen of the handsome Kajar stock, his appearance was truly prince like.

Solimaun Meerza was more soberly, though scarce less richly attired: he wore a barounee, or cloak, of the most costly dark-coloured shawl; in his girdle glittered a resplendent dagger, and he wore an ornament to his sword, called *gool-e-shumsheer*, which was a tassel of valuable and glittering jewels. The little Saheb Kerân Meerza, my friend of the Eed-ool-koorbaun, colonel of the topechees, was flourishing his small sword with a most soldierly air, and directing the furoshes to turn out interlopers; and several other great characters were flitting about on foot, like the common herd.

At length a flourish of trumpets announced that the king had come forth; the soldiers shouldered arms, and every one drew himself up into the atti-

tude of dutiful attention. In another moment a great gun in the square poured forth its column of fire and smoke; the king was seated; off went the whole of the zumbooreks, first with a tat-tar-at-tat-tat, and then in a great salvo, which shook every building in the square. The artillery, on the other side, replied; the troops presented arms; the officers saluted; rattle rattle went every drum, squeak went each fife, and flourish went every horn and trumpet. When the rapid breeze cast aside the smoky veil, the troops shouldered, and then ordered arms; and every man of every rank stood mute and still, with eye turned to the "point of the world's adoration," who, from his open lattice, looked proudly down on all his slaves below.

The business of the day began with a sight that, for once, was well enough worth seeing. It was the presentation of an immense quantity of presents from the Syf-ool-Moolk to his royal sire. We had observed in the square a multitude of camels and mules, which I presumed to belong to the camel-artillery corps and the troops, but it turned out that these formed part of this same present. We now saw the Syf himself, bedizened and bejewelled in the most gorgeous manner, issue from the palace, towards which he soon returned, heading a whole army of furoshes—two hundred at the least, I should think, "all in a row,"—with trays on their heads—the first containing sweetmeats and sugar-candy, enough to have furnished a dozen wholesale confectioners' shops; then came *kudducks*, a sort of cotton manufactures, in great abundance; then silk

stuffs; then brocades, shawls, and all manner of rich goods, though in less profusion. These were all paraded before his majesty, with the Syf at their head, and then sent off to the *sundook-khaneh*, or offices of the wardrobe. Then followed the camels, which were supposed to have borne these gifts, in another endless line; and, lastly, the mules, all of which were walked off to their proper destinations; and thus terminated this act of the comedy.

All this time the minstrels and dancers had been standing on the stage, "still as a slave before his lord," looking for the nod of authority which was to break the bonds of silence, and give life and motion to the whole scene. The construction of the square of troops, that were set to guard the sports as well as the person of the monarch and his servants from insult or treason, had undergone some change: they consisted of no less than four double rows of armed men. In front stood the kajars, servants of the royal tribe, well and respectably clad, and armed with their swords alone, extending all the way from the nassackchees to the guns in front of the palace-gate. Behind these were a double file of gholaums, well armed with Persian guns and swords; next them a double file of the *nizàm*, in red jackets and white drawers, with muskets and fixed bayonets; and, last of all, a double line of toffunchees, or native musketeers, called *karachoghas*, from the dark coats they wear. On the other—that is the right side, *topechees* were substituted for the *nizàm*. A single row of topechees, with drawn swords, commanded by little Saheb-kerân Meerza, formed the

whole guard at the palace-gate; but there stood there also many princes and officers of state, the whole still as death.

The signal was at length given; down squatted the minstrels; a clash and a yell burst from their instruments; forward sprang the dancers with a bound and a tumble; the crowd awoke from the spell which had bound it for a while, and all was buzz and eager curiosity. The show commenced in earnest. Above the line of nassekchees rose several poles, with tight and slack ropes stretched from one to the other; and in a moment were seen sitting on these rope-dancers, some of whom began to walk along the uncertain footing with their balancing poles, others to swarm up the poles, on the top of which they twisted and writhed like apes; others again caught at the cross poles, and turned in and out, over their arms and through them, playing all the tricks and antics of the most supple monkey or bear. Close to the gate came two fellows who balanced brass basins on long sticks, giving them a spinning twist, and adding joints to the stick until they rose to a great height. Then came two men dressed like huge birds, with long necks and beaks, which they flourished and twisted about in a very ludicrous way, picking their feathers and pluming themselves after the manner of birds. It was a poor exhibition; and that of a man in armour, who rose to an enormous height by means of adding joints to the pole which elevated his head, under his painted mail-shirt, was still poorer; indeed, the furious wind alone would have defeated the efforts of a more clever exhibitor. Then came a very stupid

and indecent pantomime, consisting of an old man and two old women, strangely masked—very miserable editions of our clown and pantaloon. This again was followed by as vile an imitation of Punch and Judy, with other despicable buffooneries, equally deficient in wit, humour, and decency.

During the whole of this time the dancers were dancing, and the musicians tearing away on their instruments; and certainly the tumbling performed by the dancers was the thing of all others best of its kind, had there not been too much of it. There were four boys, I think, and a little creature scarcely seven years old, as it appeared to us; and they not only danced, but tumbled and twisted their figures into every shape that suppleness of imagination could teach to suppleness of joint and muscle. They performed what is called the "scorpion," in India,—that is, lay on their bellies on the ground, and bent up back and legs till their heels touched their head, and every joint of the back in succession downwards, like a scorpion flourishing its tail; —they leaned backwards on their hands, bending their bodies till their faces were on the ground, or looking through between their legs, and in this manner they tumbled and twisted about like balls; they twisted themselves like ball and socket, from the small of their back upwards, and in this way performed sundry tumbles and somersets. Then they would stand upon their hands, feet in air, and kiss the ground; or, crossing their legs, roll about the platform one after another. Then again they would go in pairs, wreathing themselves together into a grotesque ball, and tumble over and over

as if with an involuntary impulse. In short, there was scarcely a conceivable leap, attitude, contortion, prank, or posture, which they did not practise or assume.

The performance of the rope-dancers, too, was excellent, particularly that of the man who swarmed up the pole. He lay on the top, back, and belly; clung to it by the mere twisting of his feet; recovered himself to an upright posture from hanging thus head downmost; went through between his own arms while grasping the top; performed the sword-exercise while holding on only by grasp of leg and thigh; fired and loaded a gun, &c. The slack-rope dancers were not a whit behind in their feats. Last of all came the *pehlewans*, who wrestled before his majesty, and, as you may believe, in their best style: nor were some accidents, I believe, wanting to interest those who take delight in such things, for there were some tough matches and fearful falls; but you would not relish a minute account of these, and I have already described to you this most exquisite of spectacles. With the performances of these the sports of the day terminated. His majesty, who sat with great and praiseworthy patience, doling out pieces of coin to those who performed well, at length retired, and we all followed his example. Adieu! till my next.

LETTER III.

The ladies leave Tehran. — Illuminated bazârs.—Fête given by the Queen to the English party.—The races. — The Shah's throne and equipage. — Critical niceties. — Contradictory reports from Khorasan.—Flight of Khosroo Meerza to Tehran. — The Shah's displeasure.—His advice to the Zil-e-Sultaun.— His precarious health. — Dreams and predictions.—A medical story. — State of Khorasan. —Discontents of the Princes. — Preparations for departure.

1st May.

DEAR ——,

THIS day was marked by an event, which, though we have been looking for it for some time, has made a sad change in our social circle here—Lady Campbell and Mrs. Macneil have left us, on their way to England! You know the sad feeling which the break-up of a family always creates, and this to us all was the more sad, because we have not, as in most other countries, a resource in an extensive male society. We were truly bereaved; and if we felt it, what must have been the feelings of those more immediately concerned in the loss? Well, it is all in the day's work, as they say, and my own share is fast approaching; for my preparations to proceed to Khorasan are now nearly complete, and a few days will see me *en route*. We all went through the bazârs this night, which were brilliantly illuminated, in expectation that his majesty would honour them with his presence either

this night or to-morrow: this was done chiefly by multitudes of little lamps and candles, placed in many-coloured lanterns, with a turn-about inside, painted with strange figures, which whirled round by the effect of the heated air. All the best wares were displayed, and the quantity of gold and silver foil and tinsel-paper, glittering in the blaze of lights, made a very brilliant show. But the best thing of all was a caravanserai belonging to the Moatimud, which was fitted up with mirrors and candles in wall-shades, girandoles, and lustres. Some of the mirrors were placed in swinging frames, and moving to and fro, reflected the whole brilliant affair in a very fantastic manner; and some of the *outaghs*, or chambers of the merchants, were hung both outside and in with shawls and brocade, and with a Turkish silk stuff spangled all over, and very showy. This was all for his majesty!

We halted here for a while, to eat cakes and drink sherbet, on our return from seeing the display of fireworks in the Maidaun, which were very brilliant;—showers of rockets of all colours; fountains of fire, red, white, blue, green, and yellow; grand Roman candlesticks, and a monstrous number of what they called *zumboorehs*, I fancy, because they make as great a noise as the swivels, after which they are named. They gave me a headache, and I was glad to get out of the noise and the stink they occasioned.

4th May.—The rejoicings and amusements still proceed; but after witnessing them once or twice, they got terribly tiresome, and we only went one or two of us at a time to keep the old Shah in good

humour, and not to appear to neglect his well-meant politeness in providing accommodation for us. This evening we were to partake of a novel entertainment, in the shape of a fête, given by the Taj-u-dowlut to the English party at Tehran. It was, I apprehend, the first thing of the kind that had been done, and we had a good deal of curiosity as to the mode that would be taken to carry the lady's hospitable intentions into effect. You will not, of course, imagine that the queen herself would preside, but the question was, whom she would appoint to do the honours; and thus was it managed. The preparations were made in the house of the Ausef-u-dowlut; and a spacious and beautifully-painted hall, with a large court before it, were appropriated for the scene of the banquet. Over a tank just in front of the windows was erected a stage of wood, spread with numuds, and covered with a tent for the musicians and dancers; the middle and side walks of the garden were hung with lamps displayed upon a sort of scaffolding, and the high wall in front was adorned with figures and devices in lights, as were the surrounding walls and the roofs of the other courts.

The hall itself was lighted with wax-lights, in English glass shades and girandoles, and fitted up with two tables; one set out according to the English fashion, with plates, and knives, and forks; the other having merely a cover over it, and bowls of various sorts of sherbets. I wish I could give you an idea of the painting of the room. Its panels and *taukchehs* (or arched recesses) were adorned with devices resembling the most exquisite illumi-

nations, in scarlet, white, azure, and gold; and a few mirrors, with several vile Persian pictures, filled up the rest; but the effect was altogether rich and beautiful. The floor was covered with the finest carpets and numuds, and nothing could be more imposing than the *coup d'ail*, as we sat upon our chairs in this gorgeous hall, and looked forth into the illuminated garden. Already were the musicians and dancing boys ranged on the sides of the stage opposite to us; the last in brilliant dresses of spangled stuff, and hundreds of figures, in all sorts of costumes, were flitting about among the illuminated walls. It put one more in mind of the Caliph Haroon-ul-Rasheed, and his feasts and frolics, than almost anything I remember to have seen.

Here we were received by the Moatimud and the *Sipahdar*, who were selected by *her* majesty to act as her deputies and our Mehmandars on the occasion: the only other natives present were our friend Meerza Abul Hussun Khan, and his nephew Meerza Mahomed Allee. The entertainment began by the performances of the musicians and dancing boys, of which I have already given you an account, so that I need not repeat it, although it would be wrong to omit that his majesty's chief and favourite male singer almost roared his lungs out and deafened us with his efforts to delight our ears. The tumbling, however, was on this occasion superior, and they performed several new and difficult feats, the most extraordinary of which, I think, was lying down flat upon their backs and suddenly springing up so quickly, that the eye could scarcely catch the

motion, to a position in itself difficult enough, being that of standing on their hands with the head downward, and the feet in the air or hanging backwards; it really was like magic—an astonishing exertion of agility. Afterwards came all the miserable mummery that we had seen in the Maidaun, with several very tiresome and abominable pantomimes, and some tolerable mimicry.

The dinner was a much better concern; it was a most plentiful and excellent display of the best native dishes, capitally cooked, and followed by a dessert of sweetmeats also *à la mode de Perse;* to wash down which we had excellent Madeira, very good wine of Ispahan, and a sort of champaign, which I believe was Donsky wine, a very pleasant beverage, in which we toasted the health of the *Shah-in-shah,* to the great amusement—I hope, too, to the satisfaction—of the Khans, who dined by themselves at their ease at the other table, not making use, as we did, of the vulgar appliances of knives and forks.

I need scarcely attempt to describe to you the various excellent dishes we discussed—of the *naringe* pillaw, and the *kajaree* pillaw, and the *aush* pillaw, and the *subzee* pillaw, or the *mootanjân,* or the *jizenjan,* or the various *moosommahs* or stews; the fowls and partridges stewed to rags in sweet and sour sauce; the multitude of *cookoos* or omelettes, and the sweetmeats and pickles to relish them; for though your mouth might water, I should despair of conveying to you an idea of their conjoint or individual excellencies; but I dare say you will comprehend the luxury of the great bowls of sherbet,

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orange, lemon, cinnamon, or rose-water, with lumps of ice floating in them, and of the very nice shapes of cream and water-ice which terminated our refection, in a hot night of May, rendered more stifling by the heat and glare of a thousand lamps. The evening's amusements terminated with a most brilliant and varied display of fire-works, representing, as they said, cypress trees and chinars, and many other shapes, in most profuse and dazzling abundance; but as no description can convey an idea of these things, I spare you the tediousness of one, and will only say that we returned all, as I believe, very well satisfied with our evening's amusement, which certainly was most kindly meant and liberally provided for.

6th May.—The races, which close the rejoicings on these marriages, took place to-day, and we went to see them. These races, as you probably know, are not like ours. Horses in Persia are trained to long runs, and those in question, this day, were to start from a distance of about sixteen miles from the winning post, and come in as they best might: there are no heats. The race takes place upon the road leading towards Cásveen, and a tent in which the King sits is the winning point. When the English party rode out, which we all did in full dress, we found the King already seated in this tent by the way-side, upon a throne, or chair of state, high-backed and ample, enamelled with gold, and jewelled all over, the back being adorned with very large stones, particularly emeralds, and several red ones like rubies. Many emerald pendants hung at the arms of this chair, and under his majesty's feet were

a lion and sun, the arms of Persia in gold enamel: altogether it was a handsome thing.

The tent in which he sat was lined with gold brocade, with panels of the same, and of mirrors, rather handsome. In one corner lay a mattress, covered with a white satin gold-embroidered coverlit and a pearl-worked pillow. Here at the open front his majesty sat alone, plainly dressed in a *koordee* of French grey shawl over a vest of brocade, with red Russia leather boots on his feet, and a few jewels about his cap and dagger. On one side, a little way in front, stood the bridegroom, the Syf-u-dowlut, splendidly attired in a dress of yellow silk and gold tissue; and there were several others of the princes, little fellows, also richly clad, in rows on either hand. Behind these, at the sides of the tent, stood the officers of state; in front, at some distance, were the ministers, but before them played the eternal musicians, and tumbled and danced the never-tiring dancing boys. A line of troops extended on either hand along the road, and the khans and nobles who attended the spectacle stood a good way off in front, but a little removed to the right and left, so as to leave an unoccupied space before his majesty. As for us, we stood on a little rising ground a short way to the King's left, but in such a position as enabled us to see all his majesty's movements.

There was a good deal of gaiety and movement, but little splendour. The camel band, with their red trappings and uniforms, and little flags on a stick at the hinder part of their saddles, made as good a show as anything. The zunboorukchees were on foot, and carried their own swivels on their shoulders, a

heavy enough load, and fired on the King's mounting and dismounting. There were abundance of princes on the ground, but not to be distinguished among the crowd of khans and nobles; and there was a good deal of horsemanship and spear and jereed exercise until the horses began to approach, when all eyes were of course turned to them. But there was no interest in the race: the jaded horses came in one after another, and no one felt curiosity enough even to ask who had won.

When the race was over, the King beckoned for some of our party to approach, and made some civil inquiries at us all. Among other things he asked where I had been travelling, and when I was going to Khorasan? He seemed a good deal surprised at hearing that I had been many years in South America (*Yengi-dunia*, as they call it—that is, the New World); and on learning that I proposed setting out for Khorasan without delay, he recommended me by all means to pay my respects to Mahomed Meerza, and to go about everywhere and see the country. He directed that letters should be given me for some of the princes on the way, and that a proper person should be sent with me to ensure good treatment; so you see I have the royal permission, at all events, for my journey, whatever that may be worth, and I shall speedily put it to the proof.

In the evening I accompanied Macneil to visit and take leave of Meerza Tuckee Aliabadee, whom we found surrounded by much the same conclave of critics as before. In the course of conversation he attacked Macneil for having, when he, the Meerza,

was Moonshee-ul-Moomalic, denied, as he said, his superiority and skill in Persian composition, although he acknowledged his talents and abilities in business; "and," added he, good-humouredly, "I meant to have gone to your house to demand an explanation." Macneil denied his having ever made any such sweeping assertion, as he had seen much to admire as specimens of composition in several letters written by the Meerza for the court of London; but that in one of those he certainly had observed a defect, which he did not expect to find in any production of his. "So important was the error," continued Macneil, "that I found it necessary to rectify it myself, or return it to the minister for foreign affairs to have it rectified. In consideration to you I preferred the former alternative, and effected the alteration by the change of a single word." "And what was this error?" inquired the Meerza, in some anxiety. "It was," replied Macneil, "in a letter to the King of England, in which, after having said all that was polite and kind, you concluded the epistle by requesting the King of Great Britain, in all matters of state, to *communicate* with the *ministers* of this government." "You are right," said the Meerza; "it was an error. How did you rectify it?" "By changing the words *communicate with* into *command*, with the consent and approbation of the Tabreez government," replied Macneil. The Meerza declared his conviction that the error had originated in the carelessness of the transcriber, repudiating the idea that *he* could ever have been guilty of a mistake which affected his reputation as a Moonshee, and, therefore, as a man of learning and minister of state;

and the whole discussion was carried on with an earnestness of tone which showed the importance he attached to the subject.

The inscription he is composing for the King's tomb again came under consideration. It was prepared, we found, by order of the Shah himself, and is to be in prose, consisting of a number of words, equivalent to five hundred couplets, written in the first person, as if spoken by his majesty of himself, and will contain an epitome of his life and reign, in the form of an autobiography. This mode of writing in the first person the Meerza seemed to consider as something quite original and admirable, and, I believe, was not overpleased when Macneil told him that the same had been done, as was said, by Kai Khosroo,* and that the inscription had been preserved in a Greek translation, but that it did not occupy five couplets. He replied by quoting some Arabic verses; the meaning of which was, that a noble theme made a poet speak nobly; but that he who could enoble an ordinary or vulgar theme was the most skilful and exalted of poets; in the one case he borrowed nobility—in the other he conferred it. You can have no idea of the delight which such conversations and discussions, and actual dissertations, on the most trifling matters of style and composition, give the Persians; but I am wrong in saying so; both you and I have witnessed as much learned trifling in countries that pretend to high literary advancement, as ever took place in a Persian *mujlis*.

Our news from Khorasan still continues most unsatisfactory and contradictory; unsatisfactory, as

* Cyrus.

to all that regards the pacification and tranquillity of the country,—contradictory and uncertain as to the movements of the prince and his minister. Intrigue and treachery of every sort and description appear to have taken up their quarters in that devoted province, and among those who have any concern with it at court. Even among the brothers of his blood have traitors sprung up against Mahmood Meerza; his foes are those of his own household. It is but two or three days ago that Khosroo Meerza, the worthy brother by the same mother of Jehangeer Meerza, of whom you may remember me to have written you, and both half brothers of the prince, arrived in Tehran from Khorasan under circumstances of something more than suspicion. It is said that Khosroo Meerza had been detected in tampering with the fidelity (to Mahomed Meerza) of the battalions of Khoee and Qoroomia (districts of Azerbijan), and had made some impression upon the men; but that the officers who discovered the intrigue, had instantly reported the facts to the prince and his minister. Khosroo, having heard of this step, immediately fled. His own story is different, of course. He denies all intriguing with the men, but says, that hearing of the intended journey of his brother and the minister to Tehran, and that its object was a settlement of the succession to the throne, he had been seized with a desire to be present in the capital, in order to protect the interests of himself and his brother Jehangeer. Permission having been refused he went to Mushed to remonstrate, when hearing that it had been determined to seize him, and being secretly informed that the guards had been changed

at the gates with a view to this purpose, he had fled, without reporting his arrival, at once to Nishapore. At that place some of the Khoee regiment were in garrison, and having outridden a courier from Mushed, he had directed them to seize him on his arrival. The order was obeyed; and among the letters thus obtained he found (by his own account) a letter in the Kaymookam's hand, announcing the intention of having him seized on the very night he had fled. He therefore left Nishapore, and having passed Subzawar, and finding his horse fatigued, he had laid down on the road-side to rest and feed the animal; when, awaking at a commotion amongst his people, he found himself surrounded by a hundred men, commanded by Mahomed Reza Meerza's son. Having surrendered to these, who afterwards were joined by another hundred, headed by Kahraman Meerza (another full-brother of Mahomed Meerza), he agreed perforce to return to Mushed, after he should have rested from his fatigue.

On the following day he made a short march with his captors; and his horse having recovered its strength, he began exercising it in front of the party; a manœuvre which at first roused their suspicions; but having repeated it several times, and always returned at their desire, they ceased to regard him so jealously; and at length, having great confidence in the speed of his horse, he took advantage of a wider wheel to gallop off towards Tehran. He was pursued for several miles and fired at, but in vain: he distanced his pursuers, and got clear off.

The account he gives of the performance of both

horse and man in this flight is calculated to justify the character given of him by his own mother,—viz. that he was the greatest liar on earth; he declared that he made out the distance from Muzzinoon to Shahrood, thirty fursuks, or about one hundred and twenty miles, in eight hours, his horse having previously had hard work. At Bostam he was supplied with another horse by Ismael Meerza; he came to Tehran attended by one servant, whom he says he had previously despatched, but had overtaken on the way; and, on his reaching Tehran, he took refuge in the house of his uncle, the Zil-e-Sooltaun.

The Shah, when he heard of his grandson's arrival, is said to have evinced great surprise and displeasure, and to have severely rebuked the Zil-e-Sooltaun, who made an attempt to plead in his favour, and particularly besought the Shah not to deprive the young man of his countenance, so far as to debar him from partaking in the rejoicings then going on. The King said that he felt much pain at this application, as it must proceed either from dishonesty or extreme stupidity in the Zil. That unless he laboured under a greater portion of the latter than he, the Shah, had before suspected, it must be obvious that countenancing such conduct as that of Khosroo Meerza was not the way to preserve tranquillity in the empire, but to sow the seeds of dissension and strife. "Is this," continued the Shah, "the mode you take of convincing me of your fitness to succeed me in preference to others. If so, you are greatly mistaken; but in that case I can only repeat what I have before said—go to Azerbijan, tranquillize that province, organize its resources, and thus show your-

self capable of governing. As for Khosroo, he is with you—there let him stay—give him a room and food, and let him have a couple of furoshes to attend him, but let him not attempt to enter the presence of the Shah." Were his majesty to act with as much firmness and decision on all such occasions, Persia would have more cheering prospects; the government would be better conducted, and the condition of the people be less wretched.

The allusion to Azerbijan, made by the Shah in this reply, referred to a former conversation with the Zil, who had pestered him on the subject of the succession. "Why do you trouble me thus?" said the old monarch. "If you mean to set up as my successor, go to Azerbijan; the heir to my throne must make that province his residence—it is the frontier of the kingdom, and the proper post for its protector. *Bismillah!* go in God's name—try your fortune; but, remember, if you go, you go for good and all; the moment you leave the ark I appoint another of my sons as its governor; and do not flatter yourself that I shall appoint a mere shadow, some one whom you believe you may be able to influence or control, Allee Nukee Meerza, for instance. No! I have my reasons against appointing him. I shall make Hassan Allee Meerza governor of the capital, and you will do well to recollect that his brother is governor of Fars, and his *son* that of Kerman." The Zil did recollect it, and knew well, moreover, that he himself was in no good odour in Azerbijan; so he seems resolved to stick fast by the ark and the treasure it contains, as his best supports in case of troublesome times.

These times of danger would seem to be fast approaching, for the King's health, and even his life, is assuredly very precarious; nor does he seem inclined to submit to any privations in the way of regimen, in order to prolong it. An indigestion, lately, brought on from eating inordinately of trout, then riding about in the sun, next going to the bath, and drinking freely of butter-milk mixed with minced cucumbers, had occasioned great alarm in the palace. Such attacks are now becoming frequent, and every one in it seems to be preparing for a crisis. The uncertainty of the prince's arrival from Azerbijan, an event which even those opposed to his pretensions now desire, on account of the protection they hope to receive from the presence of the regular troops that will accompany him, increases the public uneasiness. Macneil, on going to the private apartments of the palace, found servants everywhere cleaning and preparing arms. The gunsmiths' shops were crowded; every man who could afford it purchased arms for himself and his servants. Powder was bought at any price. Yet nothing was said openly; each man seemed providing separately and selfishly for his own safety, as if he feared his neighbour; and even among the best disposed there was no concert or union for mutual protection. Suspicion and ill-concealed alarm were to be discovered in every man's manner, and conversation, and conduct.

Independently of the positive illness of the Shah, there is, it appears, another cause for this alarm. There is a prediction, which has met with general credence, that he will not outlive this month. It was uttered originally, they say, by a famous astro-

loger, and confirmed by a Seyed of great sanctity, who had derived his information from another source. A further confirmation is to be found in a dream which the Shah himself mentioned many years ago as having had. He dreamed that a man brought him a sword, or a suit of armour, to buy which his majesty bargained until he at length reduced the price of sixty tomauns originally demanded to forty. The man gave the armour, but told the Shah that he had just shortened his own reign by so much as he had reduced the price, for that he should reign a year for every tomaun he had given. This is the fortieth year of his majesty's reign, so that the coincidence is alarming. Macneil says that Hassan Allee Meerza told him the month in which the prince royal, Abbas Meerza, would die, long before his decease, and he did actually die in the month so predicted; and he added, that the Shah would not outlive the present new year, namely, 1250 of the Hejira. These are singular coincidences. It appears that his majesty, whether he knows of and believes in these predictions or not, keeps a firm countenance and expresses no apprehension. Strange, if he feels alarm, that he should not be more prudent and careful of his health.

Feeble as he may be, however, he finds means to maintain his dignity, and to punish the smallest appearance of neglect or disrespect in his servants. A person, named Meerza Fazil-oollah Alliabadee, was sent for by his Majesty on business of importance. The Meerza had the temerity to excuse himself on the plea of indisposition. The Shah sent to say, that as he understood the Meerza was able to go about, he

must come to the presence. The Meerza again excused himself on the same plea; upon which the Shah, having ascertained that he was not in his own house, but sitting, in apparent good health, in that of the Ameen-u-dowlut, directed him to be brought by force; and seeing him, on his arrival, well, and not collected enough even to pretend sickness, ordered him to be blinded, but commuted that punishment for a fine of thirty thousand tomauns, and a desperate bastinadoing, which he actually received. Nor did the Ameen escape without a severe rebuke, and even a volley of abuse, for having in some sort countenanced the Meerza in his disrespectful conduct. This harsh language, however, his Majesty afterwards explained away, on receiving from the Ameen a present of five hundred ducats, while on a visit of conciliation to that nobleman. A pleasant sort of footing for a minister to be upon with his sovereign!

But I must season these grave occurrences with a spice of something lighter. We had a ludicrous incident here the other day in the medical department. Curiosity and love of physic, and advice gratis, are two ever-ruling passions in a Persian breast—male and female. Accordingly, whenever a new medical man arrives he is sure to be pestered out of his life by people coming to stare at him, and get medicine out of him if they can make out a pretext; and however stout they may seem, few there are who cannot invent some imaginary ache or ail of their own, or some of their family, to entitle them to a dose: you would swear that there was no such thing as health here, or that the pos-

sessors of it detested it. The gentleman who has arrived in medical charge of the British detachment has had his share of this annoying practice, and being at length extremely incommoded by the number of persons who flocked on those pretences to his dwelling, he resolved to give a check to such impertinence on the first fitting opportunity. One day, on returning home, he found, more to his surprise than his satisfaction, two men, strangers, quietly *praying* on the carpet of his apartment. They proved to be two Persians, one of them himself a doctor, who had come to look at the new "*Hakeem Ferengee*," but who, finding him from home, had resolved to await his arrival. In the mean time, being overtaken by the hour of prayer, they had coolly taken out their *mohurs*, or praying-pats of clay, and, popping them, down on the doctor's carpet, had commenced this most mechanical duty of lip-deep devotion.

The doctor, pretty considerably exasperated at this freedom, demanded somewhat sternly what they wanted. The men, taken unawares, and frightened at the doctor's obvious displeasure, stammered out that they were sick persons desiring his assistance. "Very well: what are your complaints?" The one, who at some former time had had some ailment, delivered a narrative of symptoms, to which the doctor listened with grim gravity.—"And you," said he, turning to the other somewhat fiercely,—"what have you to say?"

This one, who was the *medico*, frightened out of his wits, began a statement of the case of a patient of his own, on which, as he said, he wished to consult with his *Ferengee* brother; but all this he enun-

ciated in so stammering and confused a manner that the doctor, who did not understand a word, was confirmed in his suspicions of their being impostors. He therefore sent for his hospital assistant, a smart little Armenian. "These fellows," said he, "are humbugging, I am sure of it; but at all events a good dose of the *black draught* will do them no harm: give them one a-piece; and mind,—see that they take it—do you hear?" "*Be chushm*—by my eyes!" said the little man, and off he went, followed by the two unwilling patients, pale, trembling, and longing to make a bolt; but they were too well watched for that: into the fatal apartment they were forced to enter.

A few minutes passed in awful preparation, during which the small apothecary was busily employed with his drugs. "*Bismillah!*" said he at last, presenting the unlovely potion. "Excuse me, not the least occasion," stammered the patient. "No excuse—drink you must," says the pestle-man firmly, and the liquor was bolted. "And now for you, friend," says he to the doctor, meting out to him a handsome allowance. "I beg to represent that I am not the patient," timidly but earnestly utters the man of skill. "Pshah!—no patient!—then why came you here?—that's all nonsense. No representations; my orders are precise—take it you must, and shall!" And the unlucky sage, frightened from further remonstrance, made a rueful grimace and swallowed his potion. "Now," says the apothecary, who was resolved to complete the affair in a business-like manner, "now you must pay me for my physic—come—five sahebkerâns a-piece—

down with the dust." Here the remonstrances became more earnest and strong, and history sayeth not which party prevailed in this appendix to the previous contest; but that the dose was effectual there is no room to doubt, for the poor physician, who was an acquaintance of one of the members of the mission, came to call on him almost immediately afterwards, and soon got upon the subject that was uppermost in his mind, if not in his stomach. "He is a strange person, that new hakeem of yours," said he with an expression of terror still lingering in his features; "very skilful no doubt, but a little hasty or so, don't you think? I have a capital story to tell you about him, but," clapping his hands suddenly upon his *abdomen*, as if caught by a twinge of pain, "I havn't time to tell it now, I must be off — may God protect you!" and off he scoured, as if he feared he might already be too late.

7th May.—My hour, at length, draws nigh. I have resolved to set out to-morrow for Khorasan. I have made my final visits of leave-taking to Khans, Ministers, Meerzas, and friends, received my letters of introduction and my instructions, and made all my own arrangements. My establishment is complete, and, in addition to the requisite number of servants, I have engaged a young Persian Meerza as a sort of travelling companion, in order to improve myself in the language by conversation, as well as to perform any duties in letter-writing to natives that may become necessary; for letter-writing, with all the various forms of address to the sundry grades and classes of society, is a science of itself, which no

one who has not been regularly brought up to it can comprehend. I expect both delay and anxiety in this trip, for there is no doubt that the country is most disturbed, and the road far from safe. The remaining chiefs of Khorasan, since the death of the Prince Royal, have yielded a very dubious obedience to the commands of his son. Nujjuff Allee Khan, of Boojnoord, my old friend, who had played rather a double game with the prince, has excused himself from going to Mushed on the plea of illness. Abbas Koolee Khan, of Deregez, had collected a body of Koords and other malcontents about him, it was said, and was preparing to resist the authority of Mahomed Meerza; and a force had been detached against him. It had been found necessary to place garrisons in several of the strongholds, to guard against bands of marauders; and the inroads of the Toorkomans are, it is asserted, becoming daily more systematic and destructive. These are all serious matters, and would form an unanswerable argument for the Prince and his ministers remaining there for the security of the province; but unhappily the complicated system of intrigue, which has been working against his interests at court, equally demands his presence here. The Princes, indeed, one and all, are not only opposed to the elevation of their nephew, an event which they hold to be tantamount to their own ruin, but they openly declare that they never can bow the head to one who will inevitably be ruled by the Ausef, or the Kaymookam, and must therefore, in either case, be but a vassal of Russia. They have talked of going off in a body to India, with their families and property, in such an event; this

was when they were most moderate; but it is certain that, at the present moment, their thoughts are not so humble, and they are bent upon the most active opposition. Yet, I suspect, there is not the smallest confidence or concert between any of them; every one is for himself, and hopes to retain something, at least, of what he may seize in the scramble. Of all his rivals, undoubtedly Hussun Allee Meerza, formerly governor of Khorasan, is the most popular. He is a thoughtless, unprincipled man, who, when I was in Persia before, was held in no estimation, and affected peculiar sanctity. Since then, I know not how, he has obtained a name for courage; and having scattered money, when he could get it, to right and left among his troops, has gained credit for an open-handed liberality too. For this prince the people of Khorasan and Irák have taken a fancy, and would flock to him, in case of a row, in preference to Mahomed Meerza, of whom, and of his Azerbijanees, the inhabitants of the capital and central districts of Persia have always entertained a remarkable jealousy.

Reports vary every day regarding the movements of the prince and his minister; but it is now believed that the Kaymookam has actually left the city on his way hither, and has taken up his abode in a garden, the first external demonstration which a great man makes towards a move; and it has been added that the prince comes with him—*with him*, mind; not *he* with the *prince*. Such is the language held here regarding the prince and his minister respectively; and this disrespectful language is not more an index than a cause of the contempt or

dislike in which the prince is held. This state of things is not, on the whole, an encouraging one for a traveller; but it is on many accounts desirable that I should see the prince, if possible, before his departure from Khorasan, or, at all events, meet him on the road; so, "*tuwukku-be khoda!*" as the Persians say, trusting in the Almighty for assistance, I start, as I have said, to-morrow. I bid you, then, adieu, for a while. Where my next may be dated from, Heaven only knows; but I shall endeavour to write a little each day as I go along, and transmit it as opportunities may offer. God bless you, dear ——. I feel rather low at parting with the good friends I have here—it is a second tearing up from home, and to encounter what?—I scarcely know; but "Nabaclish," as they say in Ireland—never mind it! the fit will soon pass off, and, once in route, "Richard's himself again!"

LETTER IV.

Tehran. — Travelling establishment. — Ashelleck. — Geelaur. — Baughshah. — Feerozekoh. — Rugged pass. — Shameerzadah. — Plague. — Horse lamed.

Geelaur, a village about forty miles E.N.E. of Tehran,
9th May, 1838.

DEAR ——,

BEHOLD me at my second stage from Tehran. You will look in vain for the village in the map, for this road is little known to Europeans, although preferable, at present, to the lower one, because it is less hot, and less exposed to attack from plunderers; it has also the charm of novelty to me, who have already travelled the other. At eleven o'clock yesterday I bade adieu to my friends at Tehran, and convoyed by two of them, who wished to see me fairly launched, was soon beyond the gates: but the day was close and sultry; a black storm was brewing in the hills ahead; so we shook hands and parted; they returning to their humdrum life within the walls of the capital, while I, once more setting my face to the blast, recommenced my wanderings.

Do you expect from me an account of the capital I have just quitted, after a residence so much longer than I anticipated? Verily, I have little more to say of it than has already escaped my pen. It is a fortified place—that is, encompassed by a mud wall, about four miles in circumference, with towers

and a formidable ditch, but possesses scarcely one attractive or marking feature. As in all Persian towns, its bazârs are the only streets it can boast of; its other paths of communication are but crooked and winding alleys, so narrow that it is dangerous to meet even with a loaded ass: sometimes these alleys have a paved gutter in the centre, flanked with high and irregular banks; in other places, from the unsound condition of a water-conduit below the surface, holes are frequent, a circumstance which is pregnant with evil and broken legs to many a horse and mule. In all cases they are full of nuisances and abominations, not the smallest of which is the number of squalid beggars who lie just under your horses' feet as you pace along.

The bazârs are extensive, and tolerably well filled with goods as well as people, yet they make but little show: there is not a minaret or tower in the place to give effect to the distant view; and of the two domes which it possesses, that belonging to the Shah's mosque is alone to be perceived by the approaching traveller, from having a little gilded cap upon its head. Tehran, in fact, like the dynasty and government, is exhibiting those premonitory symptoms of decay, which prognosticate a total breaking up of the body politic, unless prevented by speedy aid. There is no brilliancy—no splendour—no bustle of youth about the place. Like its King, it is becoming old and careless about such things; and, like his government, it is falling to pieces. The ruins, occasioned by time or earthquakes, remain unrestored, and little of the hum of business, or the excitement of enterprise, is to be heard or seen.

Even when the King is in the palace, its great square exhibits scarcely any movement; where the bold gholaums of Aga Mahomed Khan were wont to glitter, and his victorious troops to muster, you see some straggling and ragged toffunchees crawling about; or a few horses—those of the ministers and officials in attendance—lobbing their heads in the sun under the sleepy influence of the place, with a lazy groom in the saddle. An air of dilapidation is stealing even over the royal dwellings, and there is scarcely a house in the palace, so far as I have seen, that is kept in thorough repair. The late shows and amusements were an effort called forth by a particular occasion, and will probably but deepen, by contrast, the monotonous dulness that will succeed them.

I believe I have not yet described to you my equipment. I have got with me five horses and as many mules. Four of these horses are capital; for how can I expect my servants to help me at a pinch, unless they have the means of doing so in their hands? All are fit to fight or run away, as occasion may be; two are for myself, one for a *jeloodar*, and one for a sort of factotum *peish-khidmut*, or personal attendant. The fifth, a stout Arab pony, is ridden by the Meerza, whom I told you I had engaged as a companion: if he turn out as well as my old friend, Meerza-Abdul-Rezâk, I shall have nothing left to wish for on that score.

Of the mules, one carries my bed-clothes, carpet, and all the articles required to be at hand, including my writing materials. An English portmanteau, containing medicines, English clothes, and a com-

plicated assortment of odds and ends, occupies one side of a second mule, the other being devoted to the accommodation of the Meerza and my servants. The horse-keeper has one for the horse-clothing and gear, on the top of which he himself sits perched; another is, in like manner, devoted to the muleteer and his apparatus; and the fifth is occupied by the cook, his *batterie de cuisine*, and stores of provision for the journey. There is always some trouble and some struggles with new servants, and it yet remains to be seen how I am appointed: my jeloodar I do not much like—but all jeloodars are knaves, and steal the horses' corn and straw: my peish-khidmut is a hard-working fellow, who attended my friend Macneil in his tremendous journey towards Bussora, and back by Baghdad, in winter; he was then a perfect devil of activity, and promises well in the same way now. My cook, most unlike his brethren at home, is a quiet, patient, hard-working creature, very much like poor Cossim, who acted in that capacity to me last journey; the others are of the common herd of menials. It is now that I miss my faithful John, who was so capital a hand on a march, and who used to look after so much which I now must see to myself, whether weary or not; and I shall have enough to do upon the whole: but, after all, how great will be my comfort when compared with my late trip from Constantinople! I shall have the night to sleep in, and decent food to eat; nevertheless, I often wish it were all well over: yet how shall I brook the change from this bustling life of journeying and excitement, among kings, and princes, and ministers, and khans, and caravanserais, and pa-

laces, by turns, to the quiet retirement of——if it pleases God I ever do return there? In the mean time let us get on.

We held right up a long valley that opens from the Elburz, and at the mouth of which lies Tehrán; till, winding among a maze of earthy hillocks, we descended rapidly upon the bed of the Jâjerood river, a rapid stream now swelled with melting snow. We crossed it with some difficulty, but more successfully than did a party of Mazunderân serbâz, who were returning to their homes, and who were preparing to ford it just as we passed. I was distressed to learn afterwards, that one of them had been swept away by the stream and drowned.

No sooner had we gained the other side than the heavy black clouds, that had been mustering all day, came down with a plash that soaked the Meerza, who was with me, to the skin, through a smart new cloak. Nor could my "Mackintosh" keep out a great portion of what was blown in our faces by a mighty wind. Weary and wet we reached our munzil, the village of Ashellek, some twenty-four miles from Tehran, where we had a most indifferent lodging, and found neither bread for the people nor corn for the horses. Even fire was scarcely to be had to dry our wetted clothes, and the place was so full of muleteers' cattle, that one could scarcely get decent shelter: so, after a moderate repast, which we had taken care to provide at Tehran, we betook ourselves to rest, grumbling not a little at our first day's luck.

All night it thundered, and rained, and blew, but towards morning the storm abated, and never did

the sun rise in a lovelier sky. Strange how much we poor mortals are the sport of circumstances—the slaves of physical agents! There were many things, which I cannot explain, that tended to damp my spirits on leaving Tehran—nor do I ever remember commencing a journey in a less comfortable frame of mind. Alas! might not advance of years, diminished elasticity of mind as well as body, of itself account for those more sober anticipations with which the veteran contemplates an enterprise, that would have been viewed with unalloyed exultation by the ardent youth! However this may be, certain it is, that yester-evening I experienced a depression which, had I lent an ear to its suggestions, would have persuaded me to turn my face the other way. How changed was all to-day! Not the contrast so forcibly described by Crabbe, in his "Lover's Walk," could be stronger. There was a balmy elasticity in the air, which gave its own healthful tone to the mind, and I could fancy the little breezes that played around me, were whispering words of encouragement and good tidings in my ear. A thousand larks were singing aloft, and myriads of swallows were darting, like lines of swiftness, through the air in all directions. Even the rude country we were traversing assumed a green and happy tinge, after the gracious and long-wished for rain. In mounting my horse, I felt, as in days of yore, among the Highland hills, when *booning* myself for the *muirs*—and, in truth, so lovely did the rugged hills around us appear, half shrouded in fleecy vapour, or tinged with the purple and gold of the rising sun, that but for the figures around me I might have fancied

myself, for a moment, in Strathglass or Stratherrick. Had I so far forgot myself, I should have soon been awakened from my day-dream by the fervour of the sun, which poured down its rays so fiercely, that I was scarcely sorry when, about one o'clock in the day, we reached our munzil at this place, a sweet, green, cultivated nook, surrounded with quantities of gardens and orchards.

You would have been pleased with our ride of to-day; for though the country, for the most part, was grey and barren enough, there were many pretty spring flowers shooting up among the scanty withered herbage of prickly shrubs with which all these hills are covered. Some of these were bulbs, whose blossoms were not fully blown. Others, I think, would have figured in your favourite genus, *Flox*; some, again, were of the ranunculus tribe; and there was a little beauty clad in rich yellow, with a brown velvet-like centre, like a miniature of that splendid annual with the unpronounceable name Eschaltzia California, I think, that would have quite delighted you.

It was pleasant, too, to see the cattle of the Eeliaut tribes, who have now begun their wanderings, dotting all the plains and slopes, while the black tents of their owners lay nestling in many a sheltered nook. They need shelter, indeed, for more comfortless dwellings you cannot well conceive. The coarse hair-cloth which forms them is drawn tight over certain ridge-poles, placed across low uprights; but it does not extend to the ground on either side; and the only appliance, instead of walls, to shut out the prying eye of curiosity, or the bitter blasts of

spring, are screens of split reeds tied together so loosely that both wind and vision penetrate them in every part. I can imagine nothing more cheerless than the life of a great portion of these wanderers, passing the winter like dormice, and when spring calls them into life again, spending the livelong day among their weary hills, and huddling into such wretched quarters at night. Many of them, however, live in good comfortable villages during winter, where a portion of the tribe always remain for the duties of agriculture, the rest seeking eagerly the return of spring to enjoy this *fresco* in their yeilāks and mountain pastures.

10th May.—Baugh Shah. Here we are, after a short comfortless march, in a miserable hovel at the gate of a monstrous old ruinous garden of Aga Mahomed Khan's, instead of having halted at a very pretty village a little way behind, among gardens, and streams, and pleasant green spots, which it would have done one good to gaze upon. I do not know whether it is mischief, or want of sense, that made my servants do this, but I was very angry with them, and am in no good humour now. The wind, too, that has buffeted us all day, is rising into a perfect gale, driving whirlwinds of dust into the loathsome hole in which I am sitting; so that every time Master *Mushedee*, my valet, quarter-master, and steward of the household, comes in, I greet him with a growl, which he meets with a deprecatory whine of apology. "One night is not a thousand," says he, and a more absolute truth cannot well be stated; nor is the inference that we must stay where we are, and bear it, one bit less obvious, as the rain has now

begun to pour, and all my baggage has been hastily carried in and piled up in my narrow and unsavoury quarters. I am, therefore, just letting off a little of my bile in these idle lines to you, dear ——; a most necessary vent, for there are many annoyances to excite it at the commencement of a Persian journey. Here, on arriving, I find one of my best mules dead-lame, from a kick, they say, received at our first night's lodging; and I have cause to do more than suspect that my jeloodar is a villain, for I caught him giving short grain to my horses and mules last night. Besides which, I find that these horses and mules, instead of being in good training for long marches, which it was his duty to have effected by proper exercise while at Tehran, are all so soft that they are unfit for hard work. This is especially vexatious, as it will occasion me to consume a longer time than may be convenient on my way to Mushed.

And now that I have got rid of a little of my ill humour, and the loneliness of evening steals on, what would I give to be with you for a while at the comfortable fire-side where I trust you are seated: but no—that cannot be. Allowing for the difference of longitude, and consequently of time, I conceive that you may just now, after all the duties of the forenoon are over, be putting on your things for a walk, a lounge in the garden, or a trip to . . . . . If the day be cold or wet, I think I see you seated at your writing-desk. F—— in his arm-chair, and M—— at her work. As for me, suppose a little hole in the mud, having certain recesses in the rude walls, but no windows, and only a gap for the door, with other orifices, the work of time, that admit more rain and

wind than light: among these is the fire-place, ingeniously contrived to let in water enough to drown the more genial element,—for it now rains hard. On one side of this apartment, which is just fourteen feet by ten, is spread my *numud* and carpet, with the bed-clothes already to shake down; and on it fancy me squatted, cross-legged, inditing this effusion to you; on the other side is the Meerza's lair, from a sound nap in which he has just risen, and is now scrawling Persian characters for exercise and amusement on a piece of paper, smoking a calleeoon, and intonating "*La illah-il-ullahs—Rebbiehs!*" and such like precatory ejaculations, by turns. Our baggage and riding gear occupy more than one corner: the *taukchehs*, or niches in the wall, are full of guns and pistols, swords and accoutrements of war, *joals* and journals, and all the paraphernalia of personal equipment. The earthen floor is full of holes, and, though swept out for the occasion, is deep enough in dirt; and about three yards from the door, in a still smaller and more open hovel, we can see our *artiste* preparing a savoury pillaw to comfort us. Further still are ranged our cattle, the hopes of our journey, munching at dry straw until the proper hour for giving them their more substantial food in the shape of good barley. Suppose all this, and conceive me sitting in my place undistinguishable in point of dress from the natives around me, and with the difference of a larger or smaller, a worse or better berth, whether in village or caravanserai, you will not go far wrong in painting to your mind's eye my accommodations and condition during every halt on the way to Mushed, where, *inshallah!* I hope

to arrive in fifteen days from this. It has set in for a rainy night, and my fire is giving more smoke than heat, so we shall try to warm ourselves with dinner, which is just coming in, and after a cup of tea, to bed; so good night.

13th April. — I have not written for two days, because we have had two heavy journeys, and plenty to do without scribbling. In spite of good intentions the rain delayed us from starting till past five in the morning, and we left Baughshah with most gloomy prospects of weather. But it turned out better than its word, for the early part of the day was lovely, and I greatly enjoyed the fine savage scenery through which our road led. It was truly a highland country, and I might easily have fancied myself in some part of Argylshire, or among the peaks of Assynt or Lochinver, but that the tone of colour was too universally grey, and the bare rock too predominant. Instead of heather we had only a scanty sprinkling of thorny shrubs, with a few green sprouts just showing themselves, and here and there a gush of wild tulips of a glowing crimson, like drops of blood spotting the mountain side, and sometimes imparting to it quite a ruddy tinge. I climbed a height near the road in order to take a sketch of the singularly wild features of the pass through which we were winding, and found hundreds, both of red and yellow tulips, with hyacynths and geraniums, all bursting into flower amongst thickets of wild almond-bushes all rich in blossom: it was exceedingly beautiful.

A few dark spots upon the more distant mountains had for some time attracted my attention, and

as we got deeper into the pass, I discovered that they were trees of that species of cedar which is commonly called *Arbor vitæ*, the same I had seen so plentiful in Anatolia and Armenia. As we advanced they became more numerous, and, mingled with barberry bushes, wild roses, and wild almonds, formed often a very pretty fringe of wood. The mountains too, closing in on all sides as they did, without being divided by those wide and arid plains that so commonly weary the eye in Persia, were pleasant to the sight, in spite of their indescribably ragged and fantastic shapes—nay, they pleased the more for that very reason.

We crossed two rivers, one of them the Dalloochai, a strong rapid stream, and threaded the windings and sharp ascents and descents of a long pass, ere we reached a tract, which was, comparatively speaking, a plain, consisting of undulating land without hills; but ere we did so a thunder shower came on, which again defied the vain attempt at defence made by my Mackintosh cloak; and the soaking process was completed by a keen drift of "Scotch mist," blown right in our faces by a fierce wind, known in these parts as the "*Bád-e-Firozekoh*," for this was now the highland plain of Firozekoh, and in a little time we were well pleased to find ourselves in the village of that name. It is one of the most singularly situated places you can imagine; its gardens fringe the course of two small streams; and where they meet, there is a bold and fantastic cliff of some six hundred feet in height that beetles over the houses clustered round its skirts. I made an effort to take a sketch of the whole *coup d'œil*, but

the cold was so great that I could not stand out long enough to do it any justice.

This day we met a whole cavalcade of women in march: we understood that they were the wives and family of Mustapha Khan of Tâlish, returning from a pilgrimage to Mecca or Kerbela, and a great noise they were making. I suppose it was the season of religious jaunts for the ladies of those parts, for on the preceding day we met two who *had* been the wives of some great man of Mazunderan, on their way to the holy shrine of Koom; but they, poor women, were quiet enough, for they were in their *coffins;* and, however lovely they may have been in their lives, they were most unsavoury in their deaths; for on getting by chance to leeward, as they passed us, the gale which blew over them was anything but "redolent of sweets;" I must say, it furnished a powerful reason in my mind for the expediency of "letting the tree lie where it falls."

We were lodged in the house of the Khan of the place, who was absent; and a cold berth we had of it; for the wind continued bitter all night, and the drizzling rain turned into snow, so that by daylight all the hills were covered. When we rose next morning to pursue our journey, the whole air was heavy, with a small drift that blew right in our front, and promised us a feeding storm; and to encourage us, the people of the place declared, that in a certain mountain-pass which lay in our route, we should meet a wind so fierce and cold as to turn us black in the face, were we as fair as the fairest. I shuddered a little at this account, and at

the grim look of the weather; for I had rather a more fresh than comfortable recollection of such winds, and had not forgotten Dehâ and Kasleegeul; but putting on the warmest things we had, for defence against the cold, away we went.

For twenty miles we rode up a valley ugly and barren enough, enclosed by hills covered with snow and mist: more than once we lost our way, which led us next through a mass of moderately sized hills, and over a series of trifling ascents, each of which in turn we hoped might be the predicted haunt of tempest; but, alas! we were woefully mistaken. We had risen considerably from the bed of a stream, and were slanting across the brow of a hill, when some one of the party observed a huge dark mass which seemed to reach the sky, looming like the ghost of some mighty mountain among the mist that enveloped the whole country around us. It soon appeared that a very deep and narrow ravine lay between us and this mountain; into this we slid and sprawled through very muddy ground, at the risk of breaking our necks, and *out* of it we scrambled as best we could up a perfect precipice of clay, for road we could find none, to a ledge, narrow and nervous, where we stood to take breath after our sharp burst. Then came so desperate a tug by a zig-zag path up the rest of the clay wall, that the boldest of us dismounted lest his horse should slip backwards and tumble over with him. The ascent terminated in a severe scramble up a torrent's bed, fully as steep, and very stony, but not so dangerous: indeed the unmounted horses had enough to do, and how the loaded mules got

up, I scarcely know; but Persian mules will do anything. I never was more thankful than when I saw them all safe at the top, ready to commence the descent. And here again we suffered ourselves to be deceived. Some muleteers whom we met with a little way below the crest of the pass, declared that we were close to the village where we meant to put up; but after a long descent, the first part of which was easy, but the latter extremely steep and rugged, we still looked in vain for the place.

I never saw a more rugged and rocky pass than this; we had to scramble over huge cairns of fragments and along rocky ledges, so narrow, that my flesh crept as I passed them; and peak, and cliff, and mountain rose all abrupt and barren from the bed of the little stream, and started to the very sky in jagged masses, their sides bristling with little spires of rock, like rows of sharks' teeth. One might have fancied himself amongst the broken and disjointed bones of a world that had been shivered to atoms, and left till all the soil had rotted from its bleached skeleton: not a bit of vegetation was discoverable; for the few stunted wild almond and barberry bushes that clung here and there in crevices, looked more like black spots than vegetable productions; indeed, neither leaf nor blossom had yet ventured to show itself in these inclement regions.

After something more than two miles of this savage but impressive scenery, we burst from the narrow gorge into a valley of greater breadth, filled with orchards; this was the commencement of the village where we were to remain for the night;

and had the daylight not almost failed us, we should have enjoyed exceedingly the mile that remained, among those splendid groves of fruit-trees, and forests of walnuts and chinars, ash and poplars of immense size. All around us was magnificent wood, and sparkling, dashing, falling waters, which make a Persian paradise; but our cattle were weary, and we were too anxious to get lodgings for them and for ourselves, to receive full pleasure from the scenery. So extensive is the place, that we wandered for a long time about, unable to discover where our avant courier had gone; and we might have gone on till morning, had not he sent people in all directions to find and conduct us to the lodging he had taken for us, where we arrived about eight o'clock at night, after having been more than twelve hours in the saddle.

This village is called Shameerzadeh; you may perhaps remember my alluding to it, in my first journey to Khorasan, as a place celebrated in the neighbourhood for its delicious apples and pretty women—the latter of whom are said to have borrowed from the fruit the blushes on their cheeks. It is mentioned in my route from Tehran to Semnoon, from which city it is only some few fursuks distant, and lies embedded in a huge cluster of the barren mountains I have just described; open only on one side to a bit of barren plain, from whence it gleams like a beautiful emerald in its bed of rock: you cannot see the houses for the orchards and gardens, and the dashing and murmur of the plentiful waters make it quite a delightful retreat in summer.

Alas! delightful as it is, it could not escape the hand of the destroyer: scarcely four years ago, when the plague for the first time visited Persia, it was brought here by some Mazunderanees, and raged with such fatal violence that nearly the whole inhabitants were carried off. Some assert, that Shameerzadeh, before this catastrophe, could reckon five thousand souls, others go the length of eight thousand; now, it can scarcely muster five hundred, small and great; and truly, the thickly filled burying-grounds seem well to attest the truth of the tale. Thus few of its rosy-cheeked damsels remain to support the fame of their village, and its apples were out of season.

The place has been one of ill luck to us, for I find my finest horse, a magnificent large bay, dead-lame this morning; and that one of my mules, which received a kick at Ashelleck, is just as bad. Besides this, my muleteer met with an accident yesterday which had nearly been fatal: the breeching of one of the mules having gone wrong in going down a hill, he attempted to put it right, on which the animal lifted its foot and struck him right in the belly: the man reeled a few steps, and fell on the ground, as I thought in the agonies of death, for he began kicking and rolling convulsively like one who has received the *coup de grace*. Nevertheless, after being deadly sick for a while, we hoisted him, all *doubled up*, on a mule, and got him to the stage: to-day he is better, though still a little pale and stupified.

This evening I effected an exchange of my lame mule for one of much less pretension in point of

appearance, but stout and strong, and precious in the muleteer's sight, who, no doubt, together with my friend the jeloodar, has not failed to touch a trifle on the transaction. My poor horse is a worse concern; whether from bad shoeing, or some other cause, his hoof was found, on examination by the knowing ones, to be in a sad state, so that it became, according to their report, necessary to separate the diseased part from the sound, an operation which was performed in anything but a chirurgeon-like style; and thus disabled, I have been forced to leave him to the very questionable care of a functionary of the place, sending notice of the circumstance to my friends in Tehran. Had it not been for these untoward events, and for the loss of time, which is every day becoming more and more precious to me, I should have enjoyed my day's lounge about Shameerzadeh greatly, and might have added to the few sketches which I made of this singular place.

LETTER V.

Ruined hunting seat. — Fate of a tyrant. — Eeliaut encampment. — Tootervar. — Damghaun. — Shahrood. — Mohurrum and Taziehs. — Kajar justice. — Meyomeed. — Delays. — Persian country life. — Game. — A mountain ascent. — Vast and singular prospect. — An ancient fortress. — Perilous descent.— Measurement of water for irrigation. — Kajar encouragement to zeal.

16th May, Daurghaun.

I DATE, you see, from another old quarter of mine, which, though only seventy-two miles distant from my last place of abode, it took me three marches to reach. Having being detained all the morning of the 14th by heavy rain, I left Shameerzadeh by an hour or two after noon, and marched to a ruined village about three fursucks, or twelve miles, distant. It was a hunting seat of Zulfecar Khan, a noble of these parts, a noted character when I was here before. I think I have adverted in my first travels to certain traits of barbarity and tyranny committed on the unfortunate inhabitants of his district. He seems, however, like many other tyrants, to have displayed a magnificent spirit in his undertakings, for this hunting seat has been a perfect castle. It is a fort of about one hundred and fifty yards square with towers at each corner, and an outer wall containing a caravanserai, with accommodation for an immense suite. Within there was a *hummaum*, and an endless variety of suites and

courts of chambers, with every convenience for the accommodation of both ladies and gentlemen. All is built indeed of raw bricks or mud, but more substantially than usual, and the outlay must have been very great; but, like all other fine establishments in this unlucky country, its day passed away ere it had well begun. Zulfecar Khan, who, besides being governor of the district, held a considerable command in the King's army, fell under the suspicion or displeasure of his majesty. In fact, I believe the extravagance of his conduct led to suspicions of the sanity of his intellect, and the Shah *recommended* a journey to Mecca, in returning from which he died. In the mean time Bahman Meerza, one of the King's sons, was placed in the Khan's government, and, coming or sending to this hunting seat, hastened the work of decay by tearing every beam or stick of wood which formed its frame or support out of the building. The consequence has been, that now there is not a roof on one of the numerous suites or chambers of which it once consisted, still less can they boast of doors or windows—a melancholy change from its former condition; but, as the people of the country say, there was something unhallowed and of evil omen about it from the first. The Khan, according to report, employed one thousand Toorkoman prisoners in chains on its construction. This the good folks of the district would have forgiven, for they were enemies; but they add that he *let them go* when it was finished, and this act of grace was by no means to their taste, and the less so as they themselves were heavily taxed to furnish the materials. "Ay," said some of them,

shaking their heads, "*we* paid for it, and now, behold, it is a ruin!" It was so in fact, and so complete, that, after searching every corner, we were forced to take up our quarters in a niche in one of the gateways about seven feet by nine, where the wind blew on us with villanous fierceness, without our being able to shelter ourselves from its violence.

While this delectable den was being swept out, and matters prepared for our accommodation, the Meerza and I went to visit an encampment of Eeliauts, who had pitched their black tents close by, and a most thief-like, gipsy-like set they proved to be. The men and boys clustered round us in a moment, like a parcel of wild monkeys or baboons, chattering and mowing in a most unintelligible lingo, and pawing us after a very disagreeable fashion. One caught at my sword, another at my pistol, and one little rascal, making a snatch at my gun, desired to know for how much I would sell it? On my merely laughing, he persisted more earnestly. "Would I take five sheep?" "No, nor ten," said I; "but suppose you gave me this little fellow in exchange?" taking hold of another small wretch, his younger brother I believe. "Agreed—I give him you," said the imp—"take him!" and with that he tried to wrest the gun from me, and run off with it.

There were about a dozen of tents, and at the doors of four or five of them stood a triangle of poles, to which was suspended a great black hair bag, full of milk, in each of which a fellow was churning with a big stick—a most unlovely sight. He was all bespattered with the butter-milk; and I have no doubt there was in each a Mrs. Macclarty-

like abundance of "cannie coo's hairs" and sheep's wool too, for the milk of both quadrupeds is mingled in the same vessel. I must own that I would rather not *knowingly* have eaten of the produce, but it was a curious sight to see. We wanted to go nearer to some of the tents, but the fellows called out that the women were there. Pretty women, God wot! for, though nearer I did not go, I caught a view of certain elf-locks, and mahogany and parchment features, pertaining to some of the she-baboons peeping out inquisitively from the crannies of their dismal dwellings.

Returning to our miserable quarters, I half envied the black tents themselves, and ensconced myself in the bed-clothes as my only preservative from cold. The Meerza, not content with this arrangement, fell to work, and, building a temporary fireplace with fragments of sun-dried bricks, succeeded in producing a roaring blaze from some cattle-dung and chips of the demolished fort. In a little while a capital dinner was set before us. I had shot some birds of the ortolan species, and we had bought a lamb for about 2*s.* 4*d.* sterling from the Eeliauts; and out of these my cook had contrived to dress more dishes than we had vessels to put them in: so we ate and were filled, and after a good dish of tea retired again to our fire and our bed-clothes until the time of marching, which we had agreed should be about two hours after dark. It is always, however, a bad plan to permit your people to retire to rest in the evening, if you mean to march early in the night: it is never easy to rouse them, and ten

to one but some excuse will be found to keep you on your ground till morning. On the present occasion our guide, very probably tutored by the servants, declared that there was a part of the road so bad from deep mud, that there was every probability of our losing the mules in it, unless he had daylight by which to find the right path. I know not whether to attribute it to that indisposition to motion which steals over our senses after a good meal, or to the dislike of facing a fierce wind, which blew from some snow-covered mountains close by; but the fact is, that this news, which in the forenoon would have filled us with indignation, sounded by no means so intolerable to our ears now; and uncomfortable as our quarters were, no one showed any great inclination to quit them. I agreed, therefore, to deferring the march until morning, with a better grace than was altogether creditable to me; and the more readily as I found that, move when we would, we should not be able to make a double march; so that, on the whole, little time would be lost. One of my principal objections, indeed, to passing the night at this place, was the neighbourhood of the Eeliants, who, I apprehended, would not fail to pilfer, if they could, during the darkness. But we made things as snug as we could, got the arms and valuables in beside ourselves, ranged the heavy baggage in front to prevent surprise, and then went to a rest, which proved to be, on the whole, very sweet and sound. My poor servants were the worst off, for they had no shelter, and but little clothing to protect them from the cold; but no men know how to rough it

better than Persian servants; there was no grumbling; and even the groaning was chiefly on my own part on their account.

We were in motion with the first peep of dawn, and a bitter dawn it was, the wind freshening instead of falling, and freezing everything it touched. The water had all turned to ice in the night, and the low hills close to us, which in the evening had been shrowded with mist, were this morning white with snow. In fact, the place stands in a high bleak desert country, which is colder and fully as forbidding as Driemuacher,* and in some respects not unlike it. Our march to-day led us for thirty or thirty-two miles over bare uninteresting downs, and along the course of a snow-swollen stream to a very nice village, named Tootervâr, which we reached about one p.m.; and glad was I to be at rest, for I had got one of my worrying headaches, which had not been bettered by the wind. So as soon as possible I crept to my lowly couch, and groaned and writhed there as usual till about seven o'clock, when the fiend quitted me. To-day I rose fresh and well, and proceeded by the common high road to this place, where we were hospitably received by Mahomed Wullee Khan, a friend of my friend Macneil. And now, good night for the present.

19th May.—*Shahrood.*—I rather think, dear ——, that twelve years and more ago I addressed you a letter from this very place, where I spent a weary fortnight on my way to Mushed. It is the point where the road is considered to become unsafe, from the Toorkoman inroads, and I am sorry to find that

* A well-known pass in the Scottish Highlands.

such is the case at present. Ever since the death of Abbâs Meerza, who punished and frightened these semi-savages, they have taken fresh courage, and beset the two or three next stages. Khorasan, in short, is all disturbed, and never will be qûiet except under the rule of a vigorous and severe government. I arrived here the day before yesterday, having been delayed at Deh Moollah, a village sixteen miles distant, by the lameness of another of my mules; and I am now waiting the result of an application to the Prince of Bostam for a guard, which is necessary even to the next stage, before I proceed. So you see I take good care of myself, and have no mind to be sent to herd camels in the deserts of Khyvah or Bockhara. Last time I was here I was detained by the delay attendant upon assembling a caravan. There is one now here, but they do not mean to move until after the occurrence of a certain holiday, or, rather day of mourning, observed by the Sheahs; and, in fact, I do not wish to encumber myself with them if I can get proper protection otherwise.

This period of mourning is that of the Mohurrum, of which no doubt you may have heard. It commemorates the melancholy fate of Imaum Hoossein, the grandson of Mahomed, who, with his family, perished miserably, more by thirst than by the hands of his foes, on the plains of Kerbelah, and in sight of the Euphrates. You will see the story beautifully told by Gibbon in his eighth volume, I think, where he treats of the rise of Mahometanism, and a most affecting tale it is. Among the Sheahs, or sectaries of Allee, they keep the month in which the murder happened as one of mourning. You

know Hassan and Hoossein were sons of Allee, by Fatimah, the daughter of Mahomet: places are prepared in every city, town, and village, hung with dark cloths or shawls, and furnished forth with other emblems of mourning. In these places, from a *mimber*, or pulpit, a moollah reads every day a portion of the story, or the events which led to it, with comments of his own, and much action, in a singing tone of voice. In fact, it is a sort of recitative, in which, as he comes to the affecting parts, he works himself and his auditors up, till either in reality, or in appearance, he and they get into a passion of tears and distress.

After being thus excited there is a sort of pageant or theatrical exhibition, brought forward upon a stage erected for the purpose, in which some one act of the tragedy is represented by persons dressed for the occasion. These performances are generally got up according to the fancy of the moollah, who leads the festival, and are rather ideal and imaginary affairs than accurate representations of what they shadow forth. Thus the tyrant Yezeed, whose people put Hoossein to death, is sometimes introduced, although, in reality, he was far from the scene of slaughter; sometimes, on the other hand, his generals alone are brought forward. They even strain matters so far as to introduce Europeans in one shape or other—generally as deploring the catastrophe; in short, the whole business is left much to the discretion of the author; but Imaum Hoossein, his brother Abbâs, his sister Zeinâb, and wife Sheherbanoo, his daughters and other children, with the infamous Shimmur, who at length slew him, are

always principal personages; and the actors read, or rather sing their parts, from papers they hold in their hands. Thus there can be little of theatrical illusion, but there is neither a want of energy nor of action, for they sing and read with great emphasis. In the evening, or rather at night, the people assemble again in the same places, which are called *Tekkiehs,* and continue for hours sighing, and crying, and beating their bare breasts, roaring out, "Ai Hoossein! Ai Hoossein!" and reading between whiles some funereal poetry. These performances are called *tázieh,* or mourning, and continue generally ten days—in some places still more; and where the people are very holy, or would be thought so, as at Koom and Mushed, they are kept up for forty days. I have been looking at them in several of the villages through which I passed, and miserable enough they were, but characteristic of the people and their customs; they resemble, no doubt, the wretched mimes and pageants of the old Roman Catholics, in which scriptural events were clumsily and often ludicrously represented.

Periods of delay like this which I am now suffering under are particularly irksome, for not only do they retard the fulfilment of my duty, and consequently the period of my return, but they give time for fancy to take her flights, and these are full often more productive of pain than pleasure. Anticipations of evil, or fears for the future—are they not the same?—will overshadow the mind in moments of weakness, and add perplexity to well-grounded anxiety: motion, motion, is what I now require. Business is the atmosphere I thrive best in at pre-

sent; and, thank God, I am quite equal to all bodily exertion; never did I enjoy better health; it is the mind, if anything, that feels its wear and tear: a little less there may be of that buoyancy and elasticity which belong to youth alone; but I trust that what it may have lost in spirits it has gained in firmness, and that it will carry me well through all I have undertaken.

Meyomeid, 23d May.—Again at another of my old *munzils*. It was here, you may recollect, that a fellow insulted and struck me with a heavy stick, and that poor black John rushed forward to my defence. Things are changed since then, and I am here upon a better footing, having letters to the Khan, or lord of the village, both from Macneil and from Ismael Meerza, prince and governor of Bostam. To this prince I had letters not only from our envoy, but from the ministers of state, desiring him to forward me without delay, and to provide the necessary guards. The first reply to my application was a shuffling one, assuring me that the roads were quite safe so far as the place I now date from, and enclosing a letter to Allee Asker Khan, resident here, with an order for toffunchees (musketeers) to see me past the next two dangerous stages. Not satisfied with this I wrote again, accompanying my letter with the Shah's own firmaun for the prince's satisfaction, in which his majesty commanded all his governors and officers to aid and assist me in travelling. This produced two apologies; one from the prince, on account of the delay I had suffered, and repeating his assurance of the security of the road to Meyomeid, and of the certainty of receiving all pos-

sible assistance from Allee Asker Khan. The other was from the minister, who told me he certainly would have come to see me, had he not been hindered by the duties of the Mohurrum. The prince told a bit of a fib in this matter, and knowingly too, particularly as regarded the power of Allee Asker Khan to give me guards; but nevertheless, on the strength of his assurances that the road was safe, I resolved to start for Meyomeid.

In the mean time another of my mules had fallen dead-lame, and I was forced to part with her to a muleteer for a stout yaboo and a small sum in cash. It was a poor bargain, for the yaboo turned out to be diseased; but travellers must lay their account with such contingencies—the yaboo *did* carry its load, the mule could *not*. We were lodged, during our stay at Shahrood, in a small garden-house of the prince's, the history of which affords a specimen of Kajar justice. A poor man who came to see us, told us that the ground we were on was his; that the Shahzadeh had occupied it forcibly, and built the house we were living in, without offering a farthing of compensation; that it had been a garden which he cultivated himself, and on which he lived by selling its grapes and other fruit to the pilgrims who put up at Shahrood, on their way to Mushed, but that now he was ruined. What could we say?—These things are too common to excite much sensation. While I was at Tehran, under the very nose of the Shah, the Vizier of the Zil-e-Sultaun, an unprincipled debauchee, seized and plundered the house of a seller of earthenware, because he had complained to his majesty that this profligate had forcibly car-

ried off a member of the poor man's family. What wonder that a dynasty, which winks at such crimes, should be on the high road to decay; the wonder is, that it should have existed so long.

We left Shahrood at a little after five in the afternoon, and travelling all night reached Meyomeid without accident. I recognized with great interest many points on this road which had been the scenes of incidents or alarm in my last journey; but it is altogether a desolate and unlovely tract, and I was glad, on the whole, to get it over. Allee Asker Khan received us with politeness and hospitality, giving me at once a lodging in his own house, and insisting on entertaining my establishment until he could send me away in safety. "And that," said he, "I am sorry on your account cannot be soon. The prince has sent me here an order to furnish you with toffunchees; the prince dishonours me, and he knows it; this is not the first time. It is true I have nominally the command of one thousand toffunchees, but not one have I within call — how can I? Not a tomaun of wages does he give either to them or to me; nor food, nor arms, nor ammunition, nor the means of obtaining any of these things; and yet he expects that I am to have men equipped and ready for every service he thinks fit to have performed. My shame on such a Shahzadeh!" and his terms of abuse were neither few nor choice. At length, after having blown off a little of his spleen, he added, "There is but one way for you to do, and it is this. I am going immediately to Bostâm to the prince, to see if I can't get something out of him. I will return by the third day from

this, or the fourth at the furthest, and will then certainly send you on. As to your going without people, it is out of the question. I could not let you go, were it only for my own honour. So you must content yourself here, and be my guest till I return."

To me, who feared delay of every sort, more even than the Toorkomans, you may conceive what wormwood this was, and I remonstrated; but was met always with the same argument. "I cannot take the responsibility of suffering you to go alone; you might get safe, but it is equal chances you are taken, and then where are you, and where am I? No; if go you will, give me a letter declaring it to be your own act, and against my advice—taking all the responsibility on yourself, and which I can show to the Elchee and the Prince, and then, *Bismillah!* go in God's name; otherwise I cannot let you go without forty or fifty guards—that's all." So off went the Khan, and here I am fixed till his return; but it is not so irksome a delay as many others to which I have been subjected. The place is pleasant, in the full pride of early summer. Wheat and barley are in the ear—the fruit all set. There are a number of gardens all luxuriant in foliage—noble *Chinárs* (plane trees), of one of which, in particular, I have taken a drawing; pleasant people, attentive, and full of information and anecdote about the country. In short, the delay rather tends to forward *all* my objects than otherwise, and therefore I like it. But it does appear strange to myself that the wretched spot which formerly, in the depth of winter, did look so hideous, should now be so pleasant and re-

freshing—another proof of how much we poor worms are the slaves of circumstances and physical causes. All around the oasis, made by a comparatively trifling rill of water, is bare and desert as ever; but that stream which irrigates the cultivation and gardens of the village, and murmurs over fifty little pebbly beds, together with the fine season, converts the isolated spot into a delightful abode.

We live here a truly country life, as different as possible from that of the town. The pastimes and amusements are all of a pastoral or rural character; we go out to watch the progress of cultivation, the division of the water for irrigation, to look for game, if not absolutely to hunt, and to canter along the free *Sahrah*, and enjoy its morning or evening breezes. All we eat is the produce of the farm, as we should say at home. For breakfast we have milk in numerous shapes, very fair butter, boiled and clotted cream; slip-down and pressed curds, with or without sugar; mâs, or sour, coagulated milk; a sort of pottage made of milk and flour; a very simple kind of salad, with bread, and occasionally eggs, all very neatly served up. At dinner we have *chillaw* and *pillaw* (rice in various shapes); mutton, stewed or roasted; game from the hills, treated in the same way; vegetable omelettes; pickles of onions, or carrots and turnips, &c. &c.; and to drink we have buttermilk and water, or grape vinegar and water, with or without sugar. All this, with exception of the sugar, is the produce of the place, and that alone they buy.

In like manner every one is clothed in the village manufactures. They plant cotton, and they have a

few mulberry trees for silk-worms. The former they spin and weave into clothes of various textures, chiefly coarse, when it is called *kherboz*, which the peasants use for shirts and girdles. Mingled with a little silk, and more elaborately wrought, it forms a stuff called *aleejah*, of a striped pattern, of which they make long-skirted vests (called *ulyalucks*), or exchange them for money and other articles with the Toorkomans. The wool of their sheep and goats is woven into coarse grey or fawn-coloured stuffs, for winter and common wear. All hands are occupied, men, women, and children; and the Khan's son told me that his wives (and female servants) make some forty to fifty tomauns, or about that number of pounds sterling a-year, by their work. The Khan himself is an excellent specimen of his class, a country *laird* in these semi-savage regions, partly polished by a little friction with the court, but preserving the frank blunt manners of the soldier and the simple habits of the villager. He is a sharp, keen-eyed little man, without the most distant approach to affectation either in voice, phrase, or manner. He had just issued from his castellated mansion as I arrived a little after day-break, and was dressed in plain "Hoddin-grey,"—"wrought by no hands, as ye may guess," but those of Mrs. Allee Asker and her handmaids. The introduction was an easy affair, and then he called for a horse-cloth, which being thrown down upon the top of a great bank of earth near the gateway, we all sat down and talked away until the sun became hot enough to drive us in-doors.

The young Khan, who does the honours in his

father's absence, while entertaining me with an account of his hunting excursions, and describing his adventures in the mountains, mentioned his having fallen in with a singular fort, or rather an ancient city, on the top of one of them; and his account of it so strongly stimulated my curiosity, that I was seized with a great desire to visit it myself. This desire was a little abated upon his pointing out the hill on which the ruins were situated—it looked so desperately high and steep as considerably to cool my courage. On the morrow, however, having ridden with the young man to see the hunting ground near it and look for game, I took heart of grace, and thinking it would be a mighty shame to know of such a place existing in the neighbourhood, with two days' leisure upon my hands, and not to make an effort to see it, I boldly told the Khan, that if he would provide me a guide, I would attempt the adventure, and try to scale the mountain. Shaggy, indeed, it looked, and abrupt and precipitous as the hand of time, acting on sheer bare rock, could make it: road, or path, or vantage-ground, for ascent, I could discover none—no more than on the face of our own "Raven-rock," or rock of "Rebeg;" but the Khan had more than once been at the top, and the *Shikarchees*, or hunters, maintained that there was a tolerably practicable track, so I had no excuse, and the next morning was fixed for the undertaking.

We saw no game this day—that is, nothing of what the natives dignify with the name of hill-game; namely, the wild mountain sheep and goats. The male of the former is a noble animal, with a curly neck and mane that would become a lion, and

prodigious curling horns: the latter has immense horns curving backwards. Antelopes occasionally visit the hills, though they rather affect the plains; tigers and leopards are not uncommon; wolves and hyenas, of course, abound; and of birds there are the red-legged partridge, called here the *kebk*, and a smaller sort called *teehoo*, which run like very devils. In the plains, besides antelopes, there are plenty of the *goor-khur*, or wild ass; wild hogs and hares; *ahoobarehs*, or bustards, &c. &c. Although we were unlucky ourselves to-day, yet two hunters, who had been sent out early to drive the game our way, if they could, were more fortunate, for they shot a wild sheep just above the ravine in which we were, and almost within our sight.—But to my adventure.

Early next morning I prepared for the escalade by divesting myself of all heavy clothes, retaining only a thin pair of drawers and an equally light *kabba*, or cotton gown, the skirts of which were tucked up into the slight shawl that bound my waist; so that I somewhat resembled a washerwoman, or a matron preparing to encounter a dirty lane, with her gown-tail drawn through her pocket-holes. In this guise I rode to the foot of the hill, which I reached a very little after sunrise. Very grim and stern, indeed, it looked, as you shall see, if it please God to spare me until I finish a drawing from the sketch I made: less than three thousand feet of sheer and almost perpendicular height it could not be, and if I said four thousand I might be nearer the truth—a serious subject of essay for a gentleman of a certain age, which need not be particularized.

But I felt confident and in good spirits; so dismounting at the foot of the hill, and giving my rifle to one guide and my spying-glass to another, off we went.

The first pull was but child's play, along the ridges and necks of certain *tuppehs*, or hillocks, formed of debris from above, which stood like dwarf guards around the foot of their gigantic parent; very decent hills they would have been considered in some countries. They were composed principally of shivered fragments, scantily covered with the mould into which these in time resolve themselves, and were thinly sprinkled with thorny shrubs and aromatic herbs. Next came the tug!—and let all your Ben Nevis's and Ben Lomonds, and Scoorooras, and Scourna-lapicks, and Scoore-vullians, and every other unpronounceable Ben and Scoor, hide their diminished heads, and those who have climbed them say no more about it till they have ridden five thousand miles to climb the Koh-e-Meyomeid. Talk of a forty-five degrees ascent! sixty-five degrees would scarcely measure the angle of elevation at which your unhappy friend was forced to breast up this unblest mountain. And as for road! a road for a cat or a panther there certainly was, with free liberty to choose it where she would; but, assuredly, nothing except cats and their kind, and the mountain-goats and sheep, which we saw in abundance about us, could have been suspected of making their way where we clomb,—yet the guides declared to us that this was the easiest way of ascent!

For the first *fifth* of the ascent, perhaps, I made shift with little hand-work to keep my feet; and

when I was just pretty ready for a first rest, two or three mountain-sheep which were observed, saved me from the dishonourable necessity of calling a halt, by inducing my guides to squat behind a rock in order to watch their movements. But I fancy they had winded us, for they began slowly and majestically to move up the mountain in a rugged ravine — how I envied them their wind and legs! Off started one of the Shikârchees in chase, hoping, by climbing under cover of the ridge on which we were perched, to head and get a shot at them; and on his rejoining us, he declared that he had got within range, but that, having my rifle, he found, when he pulled the trigger, it would not go off, and reason good, it was only on half-cock! After waiting here for near half an hour on we went again, and then came the *cat's* work; hands and feet—not a step could guide or guided take without the use of both, and really we had now to make our way amongst most perilous places. I have not a bad head among hills, nor had we much of that mountain-work which is most alarming, namely, scrambling along narrow ledges on the verge of lofty precipices; but the rock was so steep, that had any of us lost footing, we should probably have *rolled*, if not been *dashed*, down a sufficient space to annihilate us, and among crags and peaks that would have rasped us like a cucumber to pieces, as with a gigantic grater. Often had we to clamber up the face of high slabs of rock, inclined at a very small angle from the perpendicular, and under which extended this pretty sort of mountain-file for about five hundred feet in depth; and it was for-

tunate that I had put on a sort of shoe used in the country, the soles of which, being made of cotton rags, clung to the surface of the rock; and this also being as rough as weather could make it, and full of projections, afforded a tolerably secure footing. But we had occasionally to take very disagreeable leaps from one crag to another, where a false step might have been a last one, and sometimes the rock overhung us in a most ugly fashion, so that we had to trust chiefly to our hands to clamber up. Should any of your friends or acquaintances take a fancy to such work, I would advise them to eschew all fine shooting shoes, whether stubbed or iron-bound, of whatsoever make or fabric, and use what is used in the country, namely, the *charuk*, (a sort of raw leather sandal, much like the old Highland brogue), or the cotton-soled shoes, here called *geeveh*, much worn by muleteers, and such hard-walking persons. They stick to the stones like wax, and will neither slide nor move except according to orders,—a quality not inherent in those of English fabric. They have but one defect, and that arises from the upper part of the shoe being formed of woven cotton, and therefore easily penetrated by any pointed substance. Now as the greater part of the herbage on these hills consists of thorny shrubs of most diabolical acuteness, you may imagine the condition of my poor feet and toes before we were half way up.

Well; we continued climbing in this way, and resting very duly every two or three hundred yards, or sometimes oftener, according to the severity of the pull, until, perfectly winded, we reached a point near which I had been told we should find a delicious

cold spring of water, where we might drink and breakfast. From this place we could see the spot where we had left our horses nearly three hours before, just as it seemed under our feet. I verily believe a stone let loose would have gone smack in amongst them; and the top of the mountain was right above our heads. The guide now proposed that we should make for the spring, but I was not a little indignant at finding he had carried us full two hundred yards too high; and as two hundred yards of such a cat's-ladder, in addition to what we had already mounted, was no joke, and I had begun to have a few twinges of cramp about the knees and thighs, I signified to the guide that he and the spring might go to the deuce together if he liked, for that I would not descend a step towards it; on the contrary, in the energy of my indignation, up I sprang to gain the summit. Luckily for me I had always accustomed myself to refrain from drinking on such expeditions, so that, notwithstanding exhaustion by perspiration, my thirst was not excessive, and they told me we should certainly find either snow or water on the top—the villains!—so on I went, and brought up, panting, on the summit, just four hours after starting. Of these about one and a half were probably expended in halts for breath, or in looking *at* game, so that it was exactly two and a half hours of hard work to reach the top.

Here we rested: I opened my bosom to the delicious breeze, and sat down to contemplate the vast scene which now presented itself as a reward for our toils. To the west lay the country I had quitted, and our last four-and-forty mile stage seemed di-

minished in appearance to scarcely ten, across the brown expanse of desert. Extensive regions vanishing in distance stretched out on the north and east, those districts which are now rendered the abode of anxiety and fear by the Toorkoman inroads. No living thing was seen, nor sign of life; two or three darker spots marked the sites of villages which, intrenched within these walls, islanded the waste; but all was bare, brown, arid, save to the south, where a prodigious tract of country, riven into millions of small low hillocks and ravines, all utterly unfit for the abode of man, was bounded by the shining white surface of the yet more hopeless *Kuveer*, or Salt Desert. Through one portion of this waste our future route was visible, winding like a snake to the east until lost in haze and distance. Altogether, it was an imposing but yet a depressing spectacle, and I rather gladly turned from it to view through my glass the herds of mountain sheep and goats, that, warned by their sense of smell, were making off from our vicinity, at more or less speed, to places where instinct told them they might be secure; there they would stand still upon some point or slab of rock, resembling it so nearly in colour as scarcely to be distinguishable without the glass.

After a sufficient rest, I turned my attention to the very singular place we had reached. The top of the mountain consisted of a narrow ridge, with three principal risings of greater breadth: two of these, the easternmost, had been crowned by forts, the stone walls of which were not only visible, but in some places remained still ten feet high. Of these, the westernmost embraced an area of fifty to

sixty yards square, the interior of which had been occupied by a number of small houses or chambers, now all in total ruin. A round water tank, built of stone, and plastered inside, about ten feet in diameter, and half filled with rubbish, had at one time, no doubt, afforded water to the inhabitants. The easternmost and principal fort was about seventy yards by sixty in area; I speak roughly, for the ground was too uneven to be paced. Its walls were about five feet thick, and the interior appeared to have been principally occupied by a building, or series of buildings, consisting of seven chambers forty feet long by about fourteen broad: around these, between them and the walls, there was a space of some fifty feet, which on the south-east appears to have been vacant, but on the north-west was filled with smaller apartments of twenty feet by eight or ten, all now quite ruinous. Here, too, was the principal tank, constructed of stone and cement, and arched with burnt bricks, about twenty feet long by ten broad, and having still a depth of twelve feet, clear of rubbish.

The entrance to this fort was by a gate in the stone wall, arched with burnt bricks, and about eight feet high under the centre of the arch. The bricks are formed of the scanty soil of the hill, which is partly calcareous and partly argillaceous, and were burned, no doubt, with the weeds and furze which it produces. They are quite square, by one and a half thick, and the kiln in which they were burned is still visible, though I did not go to look at it. These two forts, which may be from five to six hundred yards asunder, have been joined by two

walls embracing the neck or ridge of the hill, inclosing a space which in some places is not above twenty yards broad, and in no part above sixty, but which appears to have been studded thickly with buildings, all small, like those in the western fort. The walls in some places are not more than two and a half to three feet in thickness, in others have been founded upon the huge rocks of the mountain itself, and there have been of greater size; the mason work is far from good, and the cement throughout of clay. No dressed stone is to be seen. I cannot find that either money or antiques have been found here, but there is plenty of broken pottery strewed about; and arrow heads of large size, both of iron and brass, have been picked up, much like those now in use among the Toorkomans. Outside of the walls may be seen the vestiges of what seem to have been graves, formed much in the present Mahometan fashion with headstones, but very rude. I think this is all that can be said about this place, which is chiefly curious from its situation:

> "The thing we see is neither rich nor rare,
> But wonder how the devil it got there!"

That the ruins are of ancient date is not to be doubted; but to determine to what period its origin or existence should be assigned, is probably impossible. In this dry climate stones remain for centuries unchanged in external appearance, yet the stones of these buildings that have fallen are covered with yellow and grey lichens. Perhaps it is from the colour of the former, that people have given it the name of "*Naringe kallah*," or the *Orange fort*; and as mighty few persons, except

sportsmen, ever think of coming here, the ruin is assuredly attributable to the hand of time and not of man, unless indeed it may have been effected at once by the act of an enemy. I should myself be disposed to refer the building to some very distant period, when the wars between *Iraun* and *Tooraun* were carried on upon a greater scale than now, and when consequently the necessity of remote and inaccessible retreats was greater than now. Every practicable pass and point were defended by a kind of stone bulwark, and several *boorjes*, or look-out towers, are still visible. The graves alone might be thought to point to a later era, for they seem to be Mahomedan, and the Ghebres did not bury their dead in that fashion; but the place may have existed previous to the Mahomedan era, and have afterwards been inhabited by Mussulmauns. They say that there are, in another part of the mountain, vestiges of an artificially fabricated and paved road, by which cattle are supposed to have ascended. I did not see it, and if any such exist it must be upon a part of the mountain very different in character from any I saw.

But let this old place have been what it may, I dare say you have had enough of it; and perhaps you may have some curiosity to know how I descended from my altitudes. It was with much toil and difficulty, I assure you. The guides promised to take me down by an easier way; but whether it was that their ideas of ease and mine differed essentially, or that they wandered from their intended path in pursuit of game, I know not; but the issue was, that a more tremendous and diabolical route, to be prac-

ticable at all, could scarcely have been picked out. We slid down great slabs of stone, on the debris of which at their foot we rumbled and tumbled along with the small stones, grasping at rocks and thorn bushes in our too rapid descent, and bruising ankles and shins, not to talk of danger to necks. Then we came to a gorge, the bed of a torrent in the time of melting snows, but now a succession of falls and precipices, down which we had to swing ourselves from ledge to ledge. At one or two points it was so bad that the guide had to undo his girdle and tie it round my waist to let me down the precipice to reach safe footing. You may form some conception of the severity of this descent when I tell you that we were three hours and a half in effecting it, besides the time spent in rests. When I reached the bottom, my feet were so sore that I could scarcely bear stepping on the gravel, and my knees and thighs felt as if they had been well beaten with sticks. I had strong symptoms and apprehensions at one time of getting cramped; but, thanks be to Heaven! that kept off, and I reached the horses with no evil greater than a pretty good fag. Returning home, I lay down for a couple of hours, and, after bathing my feet and getting the thorns picked out, could have gone fifteen or sixteen miles upon even ground well enough, had need been. I think all this is pretty well for that same gentleman of a certain age aforesaid, who, however broken into riding, has certainly of late been not much in the habit of walking. This day I dedicate to repose and to writing down what I have seen and heard. To-morrow, I trust, we are to be off; for though well

pleased with this place, which is like a jewel in a toad's head, I cannot afford to throw time away.

Reports are nearly as rife here as they were at Tehran about the movements in Khorasan. They say the Kaymookam has come to Subzawâr, and is not to move for several days. A courier, too, from Tehran brings intelligence that the King has recommended the Prince *not* to quit the province until all is safe. It is said that Nujjuff-allee, Khan of Boojnud, is *yaghee* (rebellious), and that the Kaymookam has sent two regiments to that quarter to watch his movements. I weary of these rumours, and long to get at facts.

I was amused to-day with seeing the way they have of measuring out the water of the little stream to its different owners. It is divided into *wuzuns*, or measures, which are the property of individuals, and as such may be bought and sold. These are meted out by time, but having no clocks or watches, they use a brass vessel with a hole in the bottom, which, being placed floating on a pool in the stream, fills gradually in a certain time, and then sinks. The water is permitted to run to each man's field during the filling of this basin for a certain number of times, corresponding with his property in it; and this measures the extent of his cultivation.

Did I tell you that most of the milk here is that of sheep and goats, and principally from the former? Each sheep gives about three and a half pounds, or about three quarters of a Scotch pint of milk per day. The cows give from twenty to forty pounds daily. It was a custom in Scotland many years ago to spoil the ewes' milk with salt: that is not

done here; it is used fresh and sweet, or is converted without adulteration into butter and curds.

The Khan's son gave me many additional traits of the mad misrule of Ismael Meerza of Bostam. It is wonderful that these Kajars are not swept from the country by one indignant burst of its inhabitants. So far from encouraging zeal by praise or reward, it is those who exert themselves most who are surest to be losers by their services. It is not long since the Khan's son here, whose father nominally commands a large body of men, but who, as I have already observed, receives neither pay nor allowances for this duty, hearing that a certain number of Tekeh Toorkomans had come from the desert on a plundering party, and taken the way to a village called Bearjumund, mounted with such horsemen as he could muster, and coming up with them, managed to put four of them to death, and capture five or six horses, among which were some fine mares. The heads of the Toorkomans were sent to the Shahzadeh, but so far was this from satisfying him that, instead of reward for the exploit, he demanded all the horses and accoutrements, even to the whips of the riders. This demand was resisted for a while, but at length complied with; and then he sent an order to deliver up the swords of those who had been killed. "Why," said the young Khan, "should I expose my own life and that of those about me, and their property also, in a service where there is neither profit nor thanks?" Now there may possibly be some exaggeration or misrepresentation in this and many similar stories which he told me; but when the same sort of thing is

heard from all quarters we are compelled to believe that there must be truth at the bottom of it; and there is scarce a Shahzadeh in Persia of whom similar complaints are not made.

24th May.—The Khan has returned. No hope, I fear, of toffunchees, but he has promised to do his best, and, in case of failure, to gather a few horsemen, and attend us himself to Abbassabad. Strange people these! Simple though they be, they are too much in the world to have avoided the vices of their neighbours, and occasional breaches of the eighth and tenth commandments. In coming down the mountain the other day, I missed my spying-glass, and as I had not carried it myself for any part of the day, there was no doubt it had been lost or concealed by one of my guides. They denied it, and insisted that *I* had left it on the top of the mountain, where we 'breakfasted. This I knew could not be, as I had only twice made use of it on the hill, and reminded one of the hunters of his having taken it out to examine a distant herd of mountain sheep after we had got some distance downwards. They persisted however, and this morning brought me the glass which they pretended to have found on the spot they had indicated, and brought with them some shells of the eggs I had been eating there as a token. I knew it to be a falsehood, but the glass was recovered, and I pushed the thing no further, as I was certain that it was not for *themselves* the shikarchees had attempted the theft.

LETTER VI.

Leave Meyomeid. — Magnificent Chinâr. — Halt of a caravan for prayer. — The march. — An alarm. — Abbassabad. — Hajee Agha. — Muzeenoon. — The Prince's camp. — Mahomed Meerza. — Audience with him. — The Kaymookam. — Interview with him. — Sore eyes and no eyes. — A sad story. — Subzawâr. — Arkoun Meerza.

Subzawâr, 28th May.

ANOTHER of my old stages, some one hundred and fifty miles to the eastward of my last date. The fears or predictions of the Khan were correct. He could get no toffunchees. He swears that the prince will not give one farthing for their outfit, and that without it not a man will move; yet the whole corps of near two thousand men, called the *Irâk Ajemees*, under command of Furij Oolla Khan Arab and Allee Asker Khan, have been ordered to Khorasan, and are expected there to reinforce the troops. What government can prosper under such management, what enterprise succeed, exposed to such thwarting disappointments? Perhaps matters may have been a little exaggerated by the Khan to increase the value of the aid which he ultimately afforded me, for it is scarcely possible that in such a village as this he should not be able to muster twenty toffunchees.

About one o'clock, P.M. of the 24th, he sent to me to say that he meant to see us to Abbassabad

himself, and that we should start, if I pleased, immediately; but that, in order to avoid the heat of the day, it would be better not to move till just before sun-down, when we might mount, and proceed to a spot about eight miles distant, called the Dehineh Zeyder, and there await his coming. As for him, he meant to sleep a couple of hours longer, say his prayers, eat his dinner, and join us at the aforesaid place. It was not exactly the spot which I should have chosen for a halt, as the Cheshmah-e-Zeyder, just above, is one of the most notorious places of rendezvous and ambuscade for the Toorkomans upon the road. But the Khan guaranteed our safety until he should come up, so we gave notice to the *zowârs*, or pilgrims, who had come from Shâhrood, and wished to avail themselves of our convoy, examined our arms and accoutrements, and, having loaded our cattle, started from Meyomeid about half-past five in the evening.

At one *fursuck*, or four miles on, we halted for a while at a spot well known to me and to you too,—for it is that portrayed in a certain drawing of the "Evening Halt of the Caravan," and marked by a single magnificent plane-tree, and an old tower, the ruin of a mill. On my former journey I had been attracted by the singularity of its lonely situation; it was at that time the solitary inhabitant of a vast desert. The scene had undergone a change since then; a fortified village had been built on the little stream, some hundred yards below; a few gardens of apricot and apple-trees and vines had been planted, and willows and mulberry-trees were growing on its banks. Cultivation was green still

lower in the plain, and the place altogether wore a less desert aspect than when I saw it before, in the dead of winter. But my old friend the sycamore was unchanged; there he stood in his beauty, expanded into a world of foliage, the privileged witness of the many revolutions which time, or the capricious hand of man, had effected around him; for, thank Heaven! no sacrilegious touch has as yet dared to mutilate his honours. You know my delight in fine trees, and I cannot well express to you the feeling which the sight of so splendid a gem of the vegetable world, left alone as it were in the wilderness, and marking it with one green spot of beauty, produced on my mind, combined with the tide of old recollections that memory conjured up. I greeted it really and truly as an old friend; went and viewed it from the place from whence I first sketched it, and thought I could still distinguish the very spot of earth and identical tuft of furze on which I sat to do so. I even pleased myself with a fanciful conviction of reciprocity on its part as I sat at a little distance, and took my dinner in the shadow which it cast.

But really I am getting prosy; so I must leave my favourite tree, merely stating, that I measured its girth, and estimated its height by that of a man standing beside it. It is just nineteen feet in girth at about five feet from the ground, and about ninety feet in height. Allowing for difference of character in foliage, it resembles not a little our big ash-tree at Rebeg. Its age is unknown; but, no doubt, it dates from the era of Shah Abbas, the planter of most of the fine chinârs in Persia.

From this place, now named Ibrahimabâd, we proceeded to the Dehineh Zeyder, which is a gorge among inconsiderable hillocks, through which the water of the fountain makes its way, and is conducted to Ibrahimabâd. In a little plain, on the further side of this rill, we found the pilgrims halted for evening prayer. The halt of a caravan for this purpose is always an impressive sight—peculiarly Asiatic. It was a glorious evening. The heat of a most oppressive day was now tempered by a fresher air. The western sky was glowing with orange, and amber-tinted clouds were sailing here and there over the pure blue above. The camels and mules and other beasts of burthen were straying at will over the little valley, cropping the scanty herbage, while their owners and drivers, in groups of threes and fours, were prostrated in prayer in all the more open spots, or stood or sat in the contemplative attitudes which the forms of their service prescribe. Even the kajawahs, or camel-baskets for passengers, poured out their female tenants, who, in their dark blue veils and white *roo-bunds*,* were performing the duties of the *Numâz*. The horsemen and servants were leading the riding-horses about, their arms ever and anon glancing in the declining light, awaiting their turn for performing the evening devotion. The deep intonations of "Allah-ho-Akber!" and "La-illah-il-ullah!" resounded at times through the calm air, above the low murmuring of the other prayers, the tinkling of camel and mule bells, the

* Covering of the face; the blue veil, or *chadder*, is a sort of mantle that envelopes the whole person.

roaring of the camels, and the frequent neighing of horses.

Evening closed in as we resumed our way. The orange-tinted sky took its dying tone of green; and before the cavalcade was all in motion, the stars were gleaming through the grey vault above our heads. It had been arranged that we should wait here for the Khan; but prayers were over, and he came not, and the caravan, getting uneasy at its exposed position, would wait no longer. So on we went irregularly enough for a while, no one taking a lead, but the horsemen spurring on in front, or cantering to the right and left to the tops of hillocks to reconnoitre. The country for the next sixteen miles is one continuous maze of heights and hollows, through which the road winds, affording every possible facility for ambuscade and surprise, and it is, therefore, a tract of special dread and danger. Seeing, therefore, so little of plan or order, and sensible that our numbers, as things were, only tended to increase confusion and danger in case of attack, I kept my party together about the middle of the caravan, the mules and horsemen being in front, and the camels, with their drivers, in our rear; so that, in case of either extremity of the line being attacked, I might have time to prepare for fighting or for flight.

During the ensuing hour and a half several false alarms were given, which had no other effect but to make the foremost of the cavalcade proceed with greater rapidity, thus weakening our line, which, by being kept together, would have been more strong. At length a real alarm occurred; one of my people

riding out to the left, along with another person, observed three or four horsemen upon a little height, who soon disappeared. The news spread in a moment, and the caravan sent forth a buzz of alarm. Other horsemen then dashed forth, and another of my people, in whom I had more confidence, having ridden out a little further in the same direction, returned with an account he had seen ten or twelve horsemen, which he believed to be but the advanced guard of a larger body. This confirmation of the presence of an enemy served but to complete the confusion of the caravan. All, as by one consent, halted where they were, just in a little hollow surrounded by hillocks, none of which were well calculated for a place of retreat; and every one came forward with counsel and advice. One was for proceeding as rapidly as possible, in order to gain a plain which was still ten miles off, but where surprise was less likely. Others were for remaining where we were, closing, and awaiting the first shock upon our ground. Others again proposed placing the armed men in front and flanks, and proceeding slowly in a body. I was myself for waiting where we were until the Khan should come up, and in this opinion I was joined by the most experienced of the party.

All this while there was a noise kept up, which, had it not itself been so expressive of alarm, might have frightened the fathers of all the Toorkomans of the Attock. Some roared, others hallooed, others remonstrated against so much noise in a tone still louder than those whom they rebuked; and ever and anon might be heard the half-stifled sobs and

cries of the poor terror-stricken women, who expected nothing less than death. Meantime, though the reports which came in left no doubt that there were horsemen on our flank who could not be friends, no absolute attack was yet made, and by degrees the caravan assumed a better attitude of defence. The mules and loaded horses stood still and closed up, with some armed horsemen about them; the camels were caused to kneel down, so as to form a breastwork to fire over, and behind them stood their drivers and riders, all armed men, who, with their *toffungs* or muskets prepared, held themselves ready to give a volley when the Toorkomans should appear. I and my party, with some other horsemen, guns in hand, took post behind those to watch where the shock should light, and there to give assistance. And thus matters continued for some time, the noise subsiding gradually into a tolerably orderly silence, interrupted only by conjectures regarding the appearance and numbers of our expected assailants.

But these, it appeared after a while, did not mean to make their attack in front; they kept about five or six hundred yards to our left, in a line parallel to that of our course, and I myself saw to the number, perhaps, of eight or nine, moving along the crest of a little hillock between us and the rising moon. It was then surmised, that, distrusting their own strength, or ignorant of ours, they had gone on to head us at a pass not far off; and I suggested the expediency of continuing the halt until the Khan's arrival should give us not only strength, but a leader of experience to confide in; yet the alternative of

proceeding was adopted, with such precautions as could be taken to guard against surprise.

On, therefore, we went—but this time better order was preserved—fear is a powerful enforcer of discipline: the horsemen, with guns, of whom there might be fifteen or twenty, being in advance and in the rear, and the toffunchees (chiefly camel-men, of whom there were forty,) proceeding on our left with matches lighted and all prepared for action. You may think this rather a strong body to show fight with, but I am satisfied that if ten resolute and practised horsemen had come boldly on at first, they might have scattered and dispersed the whole câfilah, and helped themselves as they chose. We proceeded thus disposed, jealously scanning every hill and valley, sending horsemen a-head to each little pass, and often mistaking the bushes on the heights, as they loomed large in the moonlight, for Toorkoman caps and riders. But the frequent pauses which we made to close up from the rear, the silence preserved, the sober steady pace of the toffunchees, with their lighted matches glancing in the darkness, and the frequent coming and going of the horsemen scouts, denoted the wholesomeness of the lesson that had been given, and afforded some hopes of an available resistance in case of attack.

The proof of this improved state of things appeared on the next alarm. Our scouts came in, declaring that a body of horsemen were now certainly coming on our rear; the caravan halted immediately, and formed with far less confusion than formerly; the kneeling camels once more afforded a good breastwork across the road, behind which stood,

the toffunchees all in readiness, and the horsemen took post on either flank. Fortunately, this time, the alarm was converted into an occasion of gladness, for the horsemen sent forward to reconnoitre came galloping back to report that it was our friend the Khan, who had just come up with a party of twelve or fifteen stout and well-armed men. This news, however, did not satisfy some heroes of our party, who, to show off their courage, thought fit to fire their muskets in the direction of the new comers,—no doubt, with intent to show how they would have burned their fathers, had they been Toorkomans. The rest of this long and weary march passed off without further alarm. The Khan sent some horsemen a-head, and kept with the rest in rear till we reached the plain of *Mian-dusht*, where there was, at least, no chance of ambuscades. The enemy, whoever they were,* discovered, probably, that we were too strong to be attacked with success, for we saw no more of them; and it was supposed that they belonged to a party of from fifteen to twenty Toorkomans, who were known to have been lurking in the country, and who had probably been at the Chushmah-e-Zeyder, from whence they had followed the caravan in hope of cutting off stragglers. We passed through the Dehineh Alhâk, also a notorious Toorkoman resort, just as the sun was getting hot, and next morning were scorched almost to a cinder by nine o'clock, when weary with sleeplessness and heat we reached Abbassabad.

* We afterwards heard that they were a party of twenty Toorkomans, who, deeming themselves too weak to attack us, left us to go and plunder a village some ten or fifteen miles distant, in which they were successful.

As we approached the village, we were assailed by old and young, who came open-mouthed to offer us accommodations. It put me in mind of the crowd of waiters, who, in some places, pour down from the various hotels to secure the passengers of some newly-arrived steamer. I found, too, that whether from alterations in the state of the country, or from some better understanding with their former enemies the Toorkomans, the condition of my old friends at Abbassabad had rather improved since my last visit twelve years ago. They could now boast of two or three gardens instead of their one fig-tree, and there was a little corn growing just below the village; and though the place looked dreary and desolate enough, its aspect was not quite so forlorn and hopeless as formerly. It was not so with the fine caravanserai. In addition to the slow dilapidations of time it had suffered severely from the shock of an earthquake, and much of it was assuming a ruinous appearance, very different from the comfortable condition in which I remembered it.

In one of the upper chambers of the gateway we found Hajee Aga Allee Asker, a person once of no small importance in Azerbijan, since for a while he enjoyed the rank and exercised the power of chief minister to the late Prince Royal, who, for some reason or other, displeased with his present premier, the Kaymookam, degraded him and gave the seals of office to the Hajee. But the star of the Kaymookam, or his talents, at length prevailed against his enemies, and the Hajee, in his turn, gave way perforce to his former superior. The Hajee, who had attended his master into Khorasan, had on this occasion

been sent in advance with a division of the Russian corps of Prince Mahomed Meerza's army, and two guns, to clear the ground of Toorkomans, for the passage of the Prince, who now, we learned, was on his way to Tehran with his minister Kaymookam: we have seen that they had for some time been expected at the capital.

We visited the Hajee, who received me with great cordiality. He had been for many days at Abbassabad, he told us, without seeing a soul to speak to, which to a man fond of society was truly a tolerable penance; and happy was the honest Hajee to get hold of any one who could give him a little information about what was going on in the world. He had always been on the best terms with the English gentlemen of the mission, he said, and claimed from us an account of all that had been going on both at Tehran and Tabreez, a demand we were very happy to comply with. It was quite delightful to hear the devoted affection with which the old Aga spoke of his late master, and the zeal which he expressed for his family and their cause; and, abundant as deceit and falsehood are in this country, I do believe that he was sincere. Allee Asker Khan, who had accompanied us to the visit, was complaining of the annoyances he had suffered for his adherence to the cause of the *Naib-ul-sultunut* and his family, and the difficulty of his position under Ismael Meerza, who was so opposed to the Prince's claims. "Khan," replied the Hajee, with a mild benevolence of tone and expression, which kindled into enthusiasm as he went on—"I am an old man—older and more broken than you, and less able for service; but I

have served the Naib-ul-sultunut — may God give rest to his soul!—long and faithfully. I was with him at his death, and I saw him buried; and never will I abandon the service of his son so long as I can perform my duty. What matters it if the work be a little longer or shorter, if we have a trifle more or less of vexation? Please God all will be well yet, and our faces will be white!" He took leave of us with much kindness, assuring us that his patrols were all abroad, and that if we only waited till morning no danger could befall us betwixt that place and Muzzinoon.

The evening was sultry, and we preferred a horse-cloth on the earth, outside the fort, with the Khan, to our close apartment within its walls. While sitting thus, and listening to some marvellous adventures of our host and companion, (one of which was an encounter of his with eighty Toorkomans, with whom he maintained a running fight, and whom he at last drove off,) the drums and fifes of the Russians beat for evening parade. I started at the sound, for it was a Scotch quick-step they were playing, and I cannot express the sensation excited by the well-known air in so wild and remote a place. These troops still preserve in the foraging cap a relique of their former costume, and their features, and light, sandy hair, would alone have sufficed to declare their country and race.

On the morrow we mounted before sunrise, and crossed a corner of the Salt Desert to Muzzinoon, still in company with Allee Asker Khan and his myrmidons, who, it appeared, had not been moved to this expedition solely from regard to us; the

Khan being desirous of paying his court to the young Prince and his minister in their camp at Muzzinoon. On the way we saw a number of the Hajee's horsemen on the look-out for Toorkomans among the tuppehs that bordered the road; and breakfasting under a nice little awning of the Khan's, we pushed forward and reached our ground about noon. The camp of the Prince and his minister occupied a small plain near the village of Muzzinoon, but we passed it by and applied for a lodging to Mahomed Khan, governor of the place, who accommodated us to the best of his ability, a matter not very easy in a small village overrun with military. Having learned that it was the Prince's intention to march westward in the morning, I lost no time in transmitting my letters to his highness and the minister; and the result was an audience in the evening with the first, and a long interview afterwards with the latter.

Prince Mahomed Meerza, eldest son of the late Prince Royal, is, as I think I have told you, the worthiest of all the numerous descendants of Futeh Allee Shah, particularly in point of morals and private character. He is religious and conscientious in the discharge of his duties, unstained by many of the grosser Persian vices, and disposed to justice and good government. In talent, his claims may not be very high; but there are few of his family, now living, who much surpass him in natural abilities, while in military affairs he bids fair for competence at least. Take him for all in all, as a *Prince* and a *Kajar*, he is a rarity in Persia; and it is devoutly to be hoped that the King may

confirm the expectations already entertained by appointing Mahomed Meerza to be his successor in the throne.*

In appearance the Prince has less to recommend him than many others of his very handsome race. He is stout—rather too much so; his features approaching coarseness, but well provided with that marking family attribute, the beard. He speaks thick, and, as one might be apt to think, somewhat affectedly; but his tone is pleasant, and *I* at least found him gracious and smiling in his manner, void of all that blustering assumption of greatness which is so offensive in many of the royal family. I believe, indeed, it is the Prince's nature to be gracious; but at this particular time it was his interest to conciliate the English; and though I carefully avoided and disclaimed all pretensions to an official character, his knowledge that I had brought out despatches to the Envoy, and was soon to return to England, rendered him naturally desirous to show me favour. Receiving me at all, indeed, under all circumstances, after a fatiguing march, with the business of the succeeding day to arrange, and a march of twenty-eight miles in prospect for the morning, was a strong proof of his good will. The audience was unusually long, although, as the Prince entered on no topics of business, the subjects of interest were limited; and, in fact, his rapid manner of utterance rendered it rather difficult for a stranger to follow him; and I was more than once forced to put his highness to the trouble of repeating his words.

* This, it is well known, his majesty did soon after the period in question.

He inquired much about the members both of the late and of the present administration in England, particularly about the Duke of Wellington, and what he was doing; of the powers of Europe, how they stood with each other; of the war in Portugal and Spain. He praised the province of Khorasan; entered into a sort of discussion regarding its superiority to Azerbijan and Irâk, which I rather questioned; and in short he did what a prince so placed might do to support a conversation which paucity of subject on the one hand, and deference, combined with a lack of facility in expression on the other, tended to render heavy. At last, darkness having closed in, the hour of prayer came to his relief, and he dismissed me, saying, that he must retire to his devotions. He had very little state; was plainly dressed; seated in as plain a tent; surrounded, as is the custom with all of the royal family, with red *serperdahs*, or screens, that had evidently seen no small length of service. When I entered, he was writing; and on one side lay an English writing-case of Russian leather; on the other was a book, I believe, the Koraun.

From the Prince's tent I went to that of his minister, the Kaymookam, a very different character. Meerza Abool-Caussim, son of the late Meerza Buzoorg, and prime minister to Abbas Meerza, one of the most eminent nobles of the kingdom, is a person whose heavy, gross-looking appearance gives small promise of talent; nor does the talent which he does really possess beam forth in his peculiar, prominent, yet half-closed eye; for he is so short-sighted that he cannot read a letter

unless it touches his nose, nor can he distinguish one person from another at two yards' distance. But, according to general report, it is no less a fact that his wits are as acute as his sight is indifferent; and though the abilities of his father were allowed to be first-rate, they are said to be surpassed by those of the son. After the Ameen-u-dowlut, this minister holds the first rank of any subject in Persia, and has purposely been placed by the Shah in superintendence, under his own son and then under his grandson, of the most important government and duties in the kingdom. The Kaymookam is a true Persian diplomatist, acute and wily, far-looking; but, judging of others by himself, he not unfrequently over-shoots the mark in finesse, and finds himself outwitted by the greater simplicity of another. By the death of his late master the Prince Royal, and a chain of political events consequent upon that occasion, he has been placed (as I have more than once hinted at above) in circumstances of peculiar difficulty, from which it is yet to be seen how he will extricate himself. A knowledge of the state of parties, and the general feeling of men towards his new master and himself at the court of Tehran, whither he was now proceeding, was therefore of the utmost importance to him; and as he had reason to believe me acquainted with these, he was disposed, as you may imagine, to give me a very favourable reception. The nature of our conference, under these circumstances, differed greatly from that which had just taken place with the Prince; but as you would not be greatly edified with the particulars, I shall spare you the detail.

The lodging of the minister was in a small oblong tent, which, in Bengal, they call a *routee;* his large tent having been struck to be sent on in advance. When I was announced, he came to the door without ceremony, and pulled me in by the hand. There was none there but a secretary or two, and two or three persons like gholaums, who seemed to be waiting for orders. Nothing can be more striking to those who have been accustomed to the imposing details of office in England or in India, particularly in the latter, than to witness the simplicity with which business is despatched in the office or the tent of a Persian minister. In India, a number of large-sized rooms are seen opening into each other, all filled with natives or Europeans, with their noses at their desks, writing away as if for dear life, among a most imposing mass of books, and papers, and official forms. *Here,* you enter a court, at the further end of which are several rooms, the large windows of which open on the area. Before one of these, the least in all probability, you may see some ten to twelve servants in attendance, with a number of people who have come upon business. At the window above sits an old man wrapped up in a shawl cloak, and his head covered with a black lamb-skin cap; before him, seated on their heels, may be two, or perhaps three secretaries, either writing, to the minister's dictation, on bits of paper held in one hand and supported on one knee, or holding in their hands bundles of papers neatly done up, which await his hearing and approval. Around the room, with their backs to the wall, and upon the numuds or felt carpets which border

it, are seated more or fewer persons, arrived on visits of ceremony or business, each placed according to his rank. The minister addresses these occasionally, and at other times listens to his secretaries, who read letters that have arrived, replies to which he dictates, or those replies which have been written in compliance with his orders. These, when approved, are confirmed by receiving his seal, which he takes from a little bag, generally kept in a side-pocket under the arm, and tosses to the writer, who performs the operation at once in his presence—a far simpler business than the confirmation of an official document at home.

It would amuse a European statesman to hear the heterogeneous details, the odds and ends of business, great and small, that come before a minister on such occasions; and all receive more or less attention too. At one moment an affair of a few tomauns, the arrears of some poor village, or its claim for deductions or immunity, comes to be debated; in the next, you may hear the returns of a whole district or province treated with as little ceremony. Next may come the despatch of a gholaum, and the details of how he is to be mounted and provided for his journey, and then the arrangement of *soorsaut* and provision for the march of a division of the royal army. I have been more than once myself in the prime minister's apartment while he was transacting business, and the hour of prayer arrived. He left his seat, loosened the sleeves of his dress, laid aside all gold or silver articles,—and dagger if he had one,—called for the *aftaubch*, or water-ewer, and washed

himself; took out his *mohur*, or little pat of kerbelah clay, on which they press their foreheads when prostrating themselves, and went through his prayers with all proper emphasis and action. This process by no means interrupted business; the secretaries got out of his way and went on writing, and he between whiles continued dictating to them, or cast his eye over a paper or account which they handed to him, or listened to the story of some one whom he beckoned to, or called to the window for that purpose.

The simplicity and absence of show or form in these matters among the Persians is the more singular, as it seems altogether opposed to their really uncandid and artificial character,—perhaps it is not unworthy of imitation. But to return to the Kaymookam. I was surprised to hear the variety of petty details with which he suffered himself to be pestered. He had given out the order of the morning's march for the army, which, independent of the Prince's attendants and his own, consisted of a regiment of the Russian guards and six guns, together with a detachment of horse—and his commands were as clear as if he had been adjutant-general all his life—when in came a host of fellows, one telling him that his yaboo was lame, and that he could get no other; a second wanting to know where he was to get money for corn and straw; a third wanting camels to carry a tent; a fourth a saddle, &c. &c., to all of whom some reply was given after due consideration of the case; and then in came his *meerachor*, or chief of the stable, to give an account of his Excellency's horses,—which was lame, which was galled; which

was in training, which was not; which were fit for use, which would be so by and by, and there they went over the whole of his Excellency's stud. Next came a whole host of complainants—one had had his little crop cut for horse-meat by the Prince's gholaums, another his horse carried off and himself well beaten by some *sowârs;* a third had his wife and family insulted, and his own ears threatened. I was astonished to observe the imperturbable attention, if not good humour, with which this beset minister listened to all these interminable details, and could not help expressing my surprise, that he who had the business of the state upon his shoulders should permit himself to be perplexed by the trifling and teazing annoyances of others, and the petty affairs of the camp. "Ay, ay," was his only reply, with a rueful shake of the head; "these little things are far more bitter than the big ones."

Just then a complaint was made against one of the Prince's peish-khidmuts, for cutting some of the village corn for his horse. The minister sent for the culprit, a fine dashing youth, and having heard the case, commanded him to be beaten. This, as *I heard,* was done, and the youth was then brought back to the presence of the minister. On his entrance, the great man, who had been holding forth about the difficulty of keeping folks in order, and "making them good," turning to me, continued: "You see I am sometimes forced to break a friend's head to make them good," glancing his eye to the sufferer as he made the remark. "Come hither, Ramazaun Beg," said he then to the youth: he came and kneeled before the minister, who, taking

him by the two ears, pulled forwards his face and gave him two gentle cuffs on the cheeks—I suspect it was the only *beating* he got,—while at the same time he whispered something low in his ear: he then drew the youth forward once more, kissed his neck, and said, "Now go about your business, and don't do so again." It was just as I have seen a kind papa do to one of his little boys that had been naughty, and it was pleasant to see this great man thus exercising a sort of patriarchal right over his erring charge.

All this sort of work consumed a vast quantity of time, and there was, besides, a world of letters to write, and read, and despatch. It was curious to see him at the latter work, for although from his short-sightedness he was forced to hold the paper close to his nose, he moved it across the line of vision, gathering its contents as it went, with a rapidity quite astonishing, just as a clever dairy-maid would skim a dish of cream. At length, however, all was over, or he thought fit to terminate the scene, for he sent one person one way, and another another, till we two alone remained in the tent, when rapidly turning to me he said, "And now, Fraser Saheb, I have made a *khelwut** for you: what have you got to say?—I know you have a great deal to tell me; tell it at once." This was to the purpose, at least; and so without any further ceremony I complied, and we conversed for a long time.

When we had concluded he ordered dinner, which, however, did not come for a good while, and in the mean time we had a repetition of the same work as

* That is, made the room private.

before. As for the minister, he excused himself from eating, saying he was much out of sorts, and had a great deal to do. So during the time we were satisfying our appetites—and mine was pretty sharp—his Excellency employed himself in writing, stretched out at his length upon the carpet, with his breast upon a pillow, and his eyes close to the paper and to the candle. At length he rose, evidently much exhausted, and I also got up to retire, observing that I had trespassed too long on his time, and that he should go at once to sleep, seeing that he had a fatiguing march for the morrow. "Sleep!" said he, with a languid smile; "how am I to sleep? No, no; there is no rest for me this night." It was twelve at night when I left him, they were to march at four in the morning, and I had to write to Tehran by a courier, who was to be despatched in advance; so I took my leave at once, and quitted the Kaymookam, satisfied that he was a man of no mean abilities, but with a suspicion that he lacks that most important talent which methodizes business, separating generals from details—that grasp of mind which embraces the whole scope of a subject without embarrassing itself with particulars, and occupies itself with great results, leaving minutiæ to clerks and officials. And yet he seems to be the man, as I myself had proof, to cut short both ceremony and circumlocution when time presses, and come as directly to the point as any man of business I ever knew.

Next day, however, I was prevented from starting early, as I had intended, by the non-arrival of certain letters and *ruckums* which his Excellency had pro-

mised to send me for the authorities in Mushed, and as they did not reach me till late in the evening, (he had sent back a horseman express with them,) I could not march till then. On the whole, the delay was of use in more ways than one; for not only did it enable me to refresh my horses after their long march, but to attend to my eyes, which had become so much inflamed by the heat and dust of the preceding day's march, that I doubt if I could have endured it to-day, so I kept all day bathing them with rose-water. In the afternoon I saw a poor wretch who was in a far worse plight than I was, for he had no eyes at all. He was one of those unfortunate instances of Persian cruelty which were less frequent in the earlier part of this King's reign than of later years, since his sons have grown up, and filled all Persia with the seeds of future mischief. Koolee Khan, the son of Lootf-Allee Khan, chief of Komeish, a district between Toorsheez and Subzawar, was lord or hereditary governor of three *Balooks*, each comprehending some eight or ten villages, and from ten to twelve thousand houses of Eeliauts. Like all the other nobles of Khorasan, he was fonder of his own way than of his lawful master's; and so, when Hassan Allee Meerza was governor of Khorasan, and his son Arkoun Meerza his lieutenant at Subzawar, Koolee Khan intrigued with my old friend Reza Koolee Khan of Khabooshan and others, to get possession of Subzawar, and this, notwithstanding that his sister was one of the young Prince's wives, and then actually in his harem.

There were other Khans who took part with Arkoun Meerza, among whom were Ibrahim Khan,

of Soffeeabad, and Allee Nukee Khan, of Baum. After some fighting and much intriguing, the details of which would not greatly interest you, Koolee Khan was taken, according to his own account, by treachery—that is, inveigled in by false assurances of pardon and forgiveness — or, as an adherent of the Prince told me, captured while pursued by Arkoun Meerza himself. Be that as it may, he was brought to Subzawar, where he was thrown into prison, and the Prince threatened to put him to death. His sister, the Prince's wife, hearing of this event, interceded for his life; and her request was so strongly supported by the other women, that the Prince promised to spare his life; they never thought of mutilation, and knew not of the act till too late to petition against it. The poor man's own story was more painfully particular. "The Prince and Ibrâhim Khan," said he, "had been drinking together till they knew not what they did, and I was brought before them from the *bourje* (tower) where I had been confined. They had already taken all they could find of my property, amounting to about four thousand tomauns; and when I besought them to abandon their intention of blinding me, or to put me to death at once, the Prince said, that if I could produce another one thousand tomauns he would forgive me. My friends brought money and goods to the amount; but Ibrahim Khan, who was my bitter enemy, would not hear of my being pardoned, and threatened to abandon the service of the Prince if he let me go. So they took me out into the court before the

stables, and brought a drunken fellow, who knew nothing of his business, to cut out my eyes. The fellow sat down upon my breast, and, taking out a knife big enough to kill a cow, began to cut my right eye to pieces, but still he could not get it out. There are two veins (*reg*), or sinews, to the eye, one here and the other here," continued the poor creature, pointing out the spots he meant in his eyeless face; " and if these are cut, the eye will come out almost of itself; but the fellow knew nothing about that, and went on mangling me at a terrible rate. At last they called for another Furosh; and in the mean time I got up with my one eye out, called for a calleeoon and smoked it, and then held up my left eye to the new fellow, begging him to give me as little pain as possible. But he was as bad, or as ill-disposed towards me as his companion, for the whole affair took up three hours, and there was I sitting up and smoking, with the blood running down over my beard to the skirts of my garments. After all was done," he went on, " they took me away, and sent surgeons to me, who applied something to my wounds. I would at that time have thanked any man to put me to death; but I have changed my mind since, and am now content to live as long as it pleases God for me to do so. I have already lived to witness retribution on most of my enemies, for of twelve who were most active on that occasion, only one survives; the rest have all suffered violent deaths. Ibrahim Khan was taken by Rezakoolee Khan, and slain by him at Khabooshan; and Arkoun

Meerza got sent to hell by a musket-bullet at Kermaun,* while I, a poor blind wretch, still exist. God is great! The late *Naib-ul-sultunut* showed me favour, and gave me back part of my land and villages; but my cousin, Gholaum Allee Khan, is governor in my room, and will not let me cultivate my ground, so it is of no use to me. Four out of five of my brothers were caught by Arkoun Meerza, who put out one of the eyes of each, and took away all they had, and the fifth, made a beggar, like myself, escaped. Prince Mahomed Meerza pitied me, and after inquiring into my case, ordered a yearly pension of fifty tomauns of money and thirty *khurwars* of grain to be made out for me, and he issued a ruckum to that purpose; but though I besieged the minister for a long time, it was only just as he was mounting for the march this morning that I got it from his secretary. I could not read it of course, nor get any one else to do so for me until they were gone; and now I find it is only made out for fifteen tomauns and six khurwars of grain. It is rank robbery no doubt, but what can I do?"

The poor man related all this with much energy and action, and his unhappy plight was calculated to interest every one in his favour; but there are two sides to every story, and I find that Kholee Khan did, in reality, do much to provoke the Prince, who was hasty, but fearlessly brave, in a manner very little calculated to bring matters to a favourable issue; and that Arkoun Meerza did no more than

* It tore his thigh in a dreadful manner, and he died of mortification after great sufferings.

most, if not every one, of his own family would have done in his place. The deed, however, alarmed his adherents, and the first to desert his royal highness was that very Ibrahim Khan, the instigator of it, who, thinking himself unsafe, fled from the place. Next Allee Koolee Khan, another of his highness's adherents, took fright and went off, and the secessions became so numerous that the prince, fearing to be left alone, shut the gates to prevent further desertion. In these ways it has come to pass that the nobles of Khorasan are almost extinct; but they have themselves to thank for it, for none of them were ever content to obey a ruler; all would be independent, and all great at his neighbour's expense; and the consequence of this disunion and treachery to each other has been their fall, one after another, to any power a little stronger than themselves individually. The fable of the old man and the bundle of rods or arrows was never better illustrated.

The same night, at half-past five, we mounted and left Muzinoon, and never drew bridle till we reached this place, Subzawar, at nine o'clock the next (that is yesterday) morning, having ridden from fifty-six to sixty miles. Subzawar, unlike most other cities of Persia, has increased in prosperity and population since I was here twelve years ago. This is the consequence of being the residence of a prince-governor, who, though he may scathe the country around, brings people and traffic to the town itself. In visiting the ark, or palace, which had been built by, and was the residence of, Arkoun Meerza, I met with a former servant of that Prince,

who showed me the place and, among other things, the stable-yard where unhappy Koolee Khan lost his eyes: all was now in ruins, destroyed after the place was taken, with the usual mixture of improvidence and bad feeling which appear always to actuate Eastern conquerors. This man gave a somewhat different edition of Koolee Khan's conduct and misfortunes, and was high in praise of Arkoun Meerza, not only for his courage and resolution, but for his wisdom and abilities. He summed up his eulogy of the Shahzadeh, and his account of the state of Khorasan, by saying, "They may tell you what lies they please, sir, but depend upon it, whoever may come here as an enemy of the Kajars, and particularly of Mahomed Meerza, will be well received by all Khorasan; they hate them all but Hassan Allee Meerza, and were he to appear they would follow the hoof-prints of his horse; but they are a sad race these Khorasanees—not to be trusted—always *yaghee*—always rebellious against him who has once obtained authority over them, be he who he may."

A serious vexation awaited me here. This morning I found my favourite horse dead lame—whether from mere accident, or from the fault of my jeloodar, I know not, but my luck has been small since he has been my servant. I fear I shall have to leave him here with the horse, and proceed to Mushed without him; a serious inconvenience, but still better than indefinite delay. These are the vexations of travelling, and the larger your suite is the greater your chance of encountering them.

LETTER VII.

Leave Subzawar.—Kahrèze-degez.—Abdoolagow.—Pastoral country.—Kallah-Seyedha.—Mr. B——.—A Khorasanee borderer.—Ameerabad.—Ruin of the country.—Arrival at Mushed.—A *hore*.—Sad dilapidation.—Misery.—Toorkoman prisoners.—An interesting incident.—Severe punishments.—Breakfast with the Minister.—Interview with the Prince.—Catching a Tartar.—Old friends.—Mahomed Khan.—Reza Koolee Khan.—Ruin and misery.—A visit from the Vizier.—A theft.—A boaster.—An old friend.

Mushed, 5th June.

YES, dear ——, I am at Mushed, the scene of so many difficulties and of so much interest in times of yore; so well remembered, so much detested, and now revisited under circumstances and with feelings so different! Here do I sit once more in the hot-bed of Sheah bigotry, but under better auspices than formerly.

I waited another day to see whether my horse would recover; but finding he could not put his foot to the ground, I left him and the rascally jeloodar together, to come on as they best could; and, starting at five in the evening, for the weather was burning hot, made a march of thirty-two miles to a miserable village, named Kahreze-degez, situated on the border of a vast plain, which extends upwards of one hundred and thirty miles in length, with a breadth of from ten to thirty. The skirts

of the hills on either side were studded with villages, on the banks of little mountain streams; and the green spots of their cultivation extended, in some instances, into the centre of the plain. But the villages were all forts, and the deficiency of gardens declared the unsettled state of the country. This plain forms one part of the rich district of Nishapore, so famous for its fruits and wine. In crossing it we saw flocks of deer, and plenty of other game; but our sober mode of marching would not allow us to pursue them. A narrow and suspicious pass, called that of the Forty Pehlewans, or champions, admitted us into this spacious plain. It owes its name to the legend of a desperate fight between forty champions of Subzawar, who challenged a celebrated hero, named Allee Zengee, but who were all slain at a particular spot, where their graves are shown. The men of Subzawar, however, took their revenge, and fell upon this hero, and slew him in another pass on the opposite side, where his grave is also pointed out. This pass we threaded on the succeeding night; a most cut-throat looking place it is, and does not bely its appearance; for it is the greatest resort of thieves in the whole country, especially of a particular tribe of Koords, who inhabit the hilly parts around it.

The accommodations hereabouts were not the most comfortable; indeed, so poor is the district, and so much have the inhabitants been harassed by the military and by plunderers, that necessaries were scarcely to be had. At Kahreze-degez we looked long in vain for a lodging, till at last an old woman, taking pity upon me, let me into a sort of

hole in the ruins of some old houses, that served her for parlour, for kitchen, and all. It was the dairy, too, and the smell from skins of rank butter and stale butter-milk was scarcely endurable: the eternal cackle of hens and crowing of cocks was *not*. So I was forced to shift my quarters into an old roofless mosque, which my servants got swept out, and spread a numud for me, and in which I had to play at bo-peep with the sun and change my position every half hour.

At the next place, Abdoolla-gow, we had another mosque for a lodging; but it was roofed, as a thousand swallows, which had taken possession before us, could testify; and to their loud chatter was added a species of compliment rather in the Persian taste, for as we slept from sheer weariness, our *beards*, and even our faces, as well as our clothes, were *defiled* by the impudent little animals, who sent whole showers of what were not perfumes upon us below. It was curious, too, that their chattering was all by fits and starts, or periodical, not continuous. The whole community, after a ten minutes' vigorous concert, would rush out as if the mischief drove them, and, after a like period of absence, would return with their bills full of mud for their nests; but the instant these morsels were properly disposed of, which happened to all just about the same moment, out they would all burst with a twitter, and a *skirling* enough to frighten away sleep from the eyes of Morpheus himself.

This village of Abdoolla-gow is close to Sultan-meidaun, a place laid down in my map as lying behind Subzawâr; and no one, who has only seen

the arid parts of Fars, and Irâk, and Azerbijan, would or could imagine that there could be so much verdure and herbage in Persia as is to be seen here. We entered the district by a narrow but flat-bottomed valley, between hills that reminded me of the pastoral hills in the south of Scotland, and which itself consisted of either rich natural meadows or cultivation. It was a cold but lovely morning; the dew glittered on every leaf of grass, and a thousand pretty flowers were blowing under our feet. As we entered the broader strath, or what in Scotland would be called the *braes* of the country, there was a bustle of pastoral life as pleasing as it was uncommon. Hundreds of cows and horses were scattered over the meadows, and thousands of sheep were on the hills; and the smoke, which arose so thickly, was not from villages alone, but from parties of shepherds or workmen, all busy at their morning labour. A few hours more saw numberless pairs of ploughs at work; and men and women, and boys and girls, were all gaily busy at the sheep-shearing, the season of which had already commenced.

The people of this village were of the Amârlee tribe of Koords, which consists, they say, entirely of thieves. We lost nothing, however, and a little before sunrise pursued our way across the plain, and down a fine green valley, till we fell into that which I knew so well of old, which runs from Mushed to Khabooshân. All was green, and we stopped several times to refresh our panting horses with the fine pasture of the meadows. Here, however, in a country by nature so favoured, the effects of war and disturbance were far more visible. Many of the vil-

lages were utterly depopulated and in ruins, and for twenty miles of road together there was not one that could give us shelter. We arrived late, that is, about five in the afternoon, after a scorching fourteen hours' ride, at a small fortified village named *Kallah Seyedhâ*, or the fort of the Seyeds. Here I found a party of artillery and *serbauz* encamped, on their way to Khabooshan, where a force of some three or four thousand men were assembling to proceed against Deregez.

The Khan of that place, who, like the rest, is afflicted with the Khorasanee epidemic of *yaghee-geerec*, or rebelliousness, had just evinced symptoms of one of the periodical returns of his malady, or rather mania; and the Prince very properly resolving to let no such lunatics go at large, ordered this force a-field to cure, or catch and confine him. I found, too, that it was to be confided to the charge of Mr. B——, a Polish gentleman, with whom, by reputation, I was well acquainted. On hearing that an Englishman had arrived at the village, Mr. B—— sent to learn my name, and then came to see me. It was some time before he became aware that I was the person who had formerly visited Khorasan, and had inflicted on the public an account of his travels, which he declared himself to have read with much satisfaction. When he did, his compliments and gratulations at a rencontre so unexpected and strange, and, as he was pleased to say, so delightful, knew no bounds. Well—I asked him to take part of my traveller's fare, to which he gladly assented, as he had just come *chupperee* from Mushed, and consequently was but poorly provided; and was desirous,

as well as I, of having a little talk together. And talk we did most volubly till the night was far spent.

Now, I can imagine your curiosity about this same B——, and your fancying him something like our delightful friend S——. But you would be far wide of the truth—no two men can well be more different. B——, as he makes no scruple whatever of declaring, is the natural son of a Polish nobleman of high rank, and from some cause, of which I am ignorant, was tossed into the world at an early age to play his part and make his fortune as he might, very indifferently provided with either means or friends. The impulse, whatever it was, sent him flying through almost every country in the world—America, India, Arabia, Egypt, Persia, he has seen and travelled through, besides European countries, picking up a little of the language and a good deal of fighting, by his own account, in each. He is, indeed, a wonderful linguist, knowing French, German, and English, the latter remarkably well, besides his own language, and that of Russia and Persia, Turkish, and the modern Hebrew, now used by the Jews. He is also a nearly universal genius: a soldier and an engineer, he is not only up to drilling and commanding troops, but is possessed of wonderful presence of mind in cases of difficulty or danger; can make his own powder, could cast his own guns, besieges and takes fortified places with surprising facility, &c. &c. &c. On the other hand, he is hot-tempered, overbearing, and impetuous, as ready to quarrel as to fight, either with friend or foe; a great

intriguer and —, but it is an ungracious thing to enumerate the failings of a person so highly talented, and I am apt to believe he affects more hot-headedness and less of prudence than belongs to him; and makes these the excuse of errors and ebullitions to mask a great deal of keen observation and deep design. At one time, from certain parts of his demeanour and conduct, suspicions were entertained that he might be a spy of Russia; but of this, for many reasons, I am inclined entirely to acquit him. At all events, B—— is a very clever, well-informed, and talented fellow—these Poles are all so talented! and though neither so elegant, nor amiable, nor handsome, as our accomplished friend, I enjoyed his society and the evening exceedingly. He fought over the battles of the "Kuzzilbash" with me, recognized every spot, and promised me materials enough to make ten stories. We shall see whether he performs his promise.

Among other anecdotes descriptive of the country and people, he gave me some traits of a man of the Amârlee tribe, the very people I had lodged with the night before, which are so characteristic, that I will give you them just as he told them to me. The man's name was Beggee, and he had been for some time in B——'s service. Among a tribe and in a country which teems with bold and hardy thieves, he was remarkable for feats of daring and dexterity. Reza Koolee Khan of Khabooshan, the principal chief of these parts, and of Beggee's own tribe, had offended this worthy by seizing and beating his uncle, and he swore to be revenged. Not that he cared a

whit for his uncle, but the steam of his thieving propensities was up, and he wanted some excuse for letting it off in a manner congenial to his tastes.

The Khan had a particular favourite mare, for which, as he wanted to breed from her, he had procured a celebrated Toorkoman horse of the Akhâl race, and Beggee could think of no better or more suitable retribution than to steal these valuable animals. The mode he adopted to put this scheme in execution, affords about as good a proof as possible of the man's fearless audacity. The Khan was encamped at the Tuppeh Kholasseh, near Khabooshan, with about five thousand horsemen; and the mare and horse, both for superior security, and in order to be nearer the master's eye, were picketed before his tent. Yet in this state of things the fellow entered the camp alone, contrived to loosen head and heel ropes of both, and mounting the mare rode off, with the horse following him, in the face of the whole camp. There was a pretty commotion you may believe, and a number of the horsemen mounting, pursued the thief with hue and cry on the road towards Nishapour. Beggee was sure enough of the mare, for he knew her speed; but he wanted to secure the horse also, and this retarded his movements so much, that the best-mounted of his pursuers came up with him. This man he slew as he approached, and did the same by the second, driving their horses on before him; the bulk of the rest were far behind, but as any one came up, he gave him battle; so after blowing their horses, and getting several of the party killed or wounded, they gave up

the chase, and Beggee got his prizes all safe into Nishapour.

Soon afterwards, Reza Koolee Khan took Nishapour, and Beggee in it. Resolved to punish his daring robbery, yet not willing to destroy so clever a fellow, he compromised the matter by putting out one of his eyes, and retaining him in his service, which the fellow, strange as it may seem, entered with alacrity, for he delighted in troubled times, and Reza Koolee Khan was now at war with the Prince Royal. To the Khan, on the other hand, his services were of the highest value, for there were few on whose courage and activity he could rely so securely.

These qualities were particularly conspicuous at the siege of Ameerabad, where he was often made the medium of intelligence between the besieged and their friends without; and it became so much a matter of consequence to the besiegers to catch him if possible, that they spared no pains for the purpose. One night, after the place had been completely invested, the tramp of horses' feet was heard rapidly approaching; an alarm was instantly spread, a fire of musquetry was directed towards the quarter from whence the sound came, and even the guns of the battery were fired once or twice with grape, in the belief that a body of Reza Koolee's horse were approaching. But the night was so dark that no distant object could be seen, and B——, who had then a command in the besieging troops, stopped the firing until they should discover whether there really were or were not an enemy to fire at.

It was then that a single horseman was seen ra-

pidly threading his way towards the gate of the invested fortress, shouting out the Koordish war-cry of *Loo-loo-loo-loo!* which caused an immediate hurrying of the besieged to the bastion walls, and elicited from them a heavy fire upon the lines; an equally heavy and incessant fire was kept up by the serbauz upon the horseman, who having reached the crest of the glacis, not ten yards' distant from the advanced parallel of the besiegers, fell dead, as it seemed, to the ground. There he lay, but the strangest thing was, that the horse had disappeared; yet as the man had fallen close to the ditch, it was thought possible the animal had tumbled in. Still the heap seemed too large for the man alone, and there was something which roused B——'s suspicions. So as the fire from the fort did not permit them to quit the trench, he told the soldiers to keep a good look out upon the dead body. They had not watched it long before the heap started into life; both man and horse rose up, the former mounted, dashed along the glacis amid the shower of balls poured from the muskets of the serbauz, gained the gate, which was instantly opened for him, and sprung through it unharmed.

On the capture of Ameerabad this worthy was found by B——, who proposed to retain him in his service; the man consented, and B—— proceeded to talk about clothing and mounting him, for neither horse nor apparel had Beggee: "Oh," replied this valuable retainer, "be under no uneasiness about that; upon my head be it! You shall soon see me clothed and mounted to your liking." Accordingly, when Khabooshan was invested, soon after, all but

one gate, near which a number of the enemy's horse were posted, ready to enter in the morning, our adventurer coolly repairs to that gate, and lays himself down to sleep till dawn. We may presume, however, that he slept but with one eye, for as the first horseman, a straggler, ahead of the rest, approached, up starts Beggee, catches the unconscious sowâr by the leg, tilts him over in a trice, and before he could well open his mouth for a cry, beats out his brains with a stone. Then coolly but rapidly stripping off his arms and his dress, which were good, he mounted and rode off to camp. "I have brought these things," said he to B——, and pointing to the man's clothes and harness, "to convince you that I did not steal the horse, but took him fairly by force of arms."

But Beggee was nothing in the piping times of peace; it was only in scenes of danger and enterprize that he throve. When the campaign was at an end, he came to B—— and asked his leave. "Why, what is the matter?" said B——; "are you not contented?" "Oh yes," said the man; "quite content with you, but not with your service; I cannot stay—these quiet times don't suit me at all; so long as you had work to do, I was glad to do it, but if I am not doing something for my master, I must be doing a little business for myself; so, sir, I should probably be *robbing you*—I could not help it, I must still be doing, so we had best part while I am honest. As for me, sir, there is no fear that, wherever I am, I shall be well armed and mounted. Were I taken and carried to Khyvah to-morrow, I would suffer you to take off my head if I did not return within

two months, better mounted and appointed than before:" and off he accordingly went. This is one of a class of Border heroes, of which there were once many more in Khorasan, resembling greatly the ancient Border worthies of our own country who

> "Sought the beeves that made their broth
> In Scotland and in England both."

Next morning B—— and I parted on horseback. He went west, I east, probably never to meet again: —yet who can tell? This world is full of strange coincidences and unexpected occurrences; and one of these, no more singular than that which threw us together to-day, may bring us into contact again. I marched but a short way, for my horses have felt the effects of heat, of insufficient food, and bad attendance, and I must spare them; so I halted at a place called Goonahbad, intending to start again at midnight, and march in next morning to Mushed. During a halt we made for breakfast in a green meadow, where there were a number of *cannauts*, or under-ground canals, I amused my companion the Meerza, and the people, by catching a dozen of fish out of one of the cannaut wells, which were full of them. They were a leather-mouthed fish, which seldom exceeded nine inches in length, and were hardly worth eating.

Passing onwards, we marched close by the walls of Ameerabâd, a very strong fortress built by my old friend Reza Koolee Khan and another chief, Kereem Khan, who was his creature, in order to establish their power in this district. But the troops of the late Prince Royal, under the command of some English officers, and my friend B——, took and destroyed the

place after a short regular siege. The ditch of this fort was then about ninety feet deep and of a proportional breadth; and the faces or curtains of the four sides were defended by projecting bastions.

Our march to-day was indeed one scene of ruin and devastation,—a good specimen of what war and conquest are in the East. Hundreds of ruined villages were in sight, with scarcely one sign of inhabitants. As for gardens or orchards, there were none whatever; all had been cut down by the soldiery for military purposes and for fuel. "I have myself destroyed some dozens of orchards," said B—— to me, speaking of the state of the country: "what help was there for it? We wanted fuel;—were we to starve? No; I took what came to hand. I wanted fascines for the works at Ameerabâd." The Prince had just built a temporary bath: without saying a word to him I unroofed it, and took the materials for my fascines. It is true enough, as you remark, that the country is sadly depopulated and laid waste; but what better can the Khorasanees expect? they never will be quiet." "No," replied a Sooltaun, or captain of artillery, who had come along with B—— to dine with me, "not one of these Khans can bear a master, let him be Turk or Kajar. If there were no one now to control them, they would be fighting with one another." "He says the truth," observed B——; "they have always been a yaghee race, and never will be better. What fault is it of ours, then, if the country be wasted?" "After all," said the Sooltaun, "the Prince has done them one good turn at least. Before he came, not a man could go from hence to Mushed without running nine chances to

one of being robbed and plundered by the way. Travellers were forced to wait till a party of thirty or forty could be formed; but now they can go in peace, one or two at a time—just as they like—Bismillah!" "Ay," retorted B—— laughing, "provided the *serbauz* (soldiers) of that same Prince do not strip and plunder them on the way!"

And it is all true. The worst customers a poor fellow can meet with on the road are the soldiers of the royal army; they strip every foot-passenger they can catch who is worth the trouble; they have destroyed most of the villages on the road from Azerbijan to Mushed, and the approach of a detachment, while the corn is green on the ground, is more dreaded than a flight of locusts. Khorasan is now the next thing to a desert; and it may be a question whether the condition to which it has been reduced by the arms and conquest (temporary only, it is to be feared,) of the Prince Royal, be not more grievous to the people, and pernicious to the country at large, than its former disturbed and unsettled state,—pillaged and devastated by the Toorkomans, and oppressed by ambitious nobles. The Prince, indeed, has ruined or extirpated the race of rebellious Khans; but, in rooting up the tares, he has torn up most of the wheat, while the most noxious weeds, or rather exotics, the Toorkomans, flourish and exhaust the soil by continual chuppows.

On the morning of the fourth of June, by three of the clock we were in the saddle, and by eleven in the forenoon we reached the gates of Mushed. It was with a strange mustering of old recollections that I saw again the golden dome looming through

the haze, and recognized each once familiar object as it rose to memory through the mists of long past years. But many a change had taken place. The country, however destroyed at a distance, had improved near the walls, and villages have increased in number, though each is encircled with its wall and towers. Several gardens have been established, and a sheet of rich cultivation extends for some distance around; but the watch and safety towers that have been everywhere erected amongst it, declare too surely the insecurity of the husbandman as he labours in his field, even close to the gates of the capital.

I was detained for some time in the great street that divides the town in two parts, while my servant went to procure me lodgings; and even after having taken possession of a house indicated by a man of the Vizier's, we had still to fight a battle with a person who came in a rage to turn us out, swearing that *he* had hired the place, and have it he would. I said nothing, but allowed the servants to carry on the war, which they did "ingenti clangore" — with much noise and violent abuse, till our rival, who turned out to be Prince Kahraman Meerza's *nazir*, or steward, discovered who I was, and that I was a guest of the Vizier's. On this he instantly altered his tone, and begged I would by no means incommode myself, but remain where I was as *his* guest. The only reply I made to this equivocal hospitality was an expression of my regret at interfering in any way with the arrangements of another person; and observing, that if the case was really as he stated it, I should by all means endeavour to find another

lodging. This resolution was as strongly opposed by the pretended owner as by the Vizier's man who had pointed out the place to me: but I nevertheless made the attempt, fruitlessly as it proved, and was at length forced unwillingly to keep possession of my quarters. I learned, after all, that this same *nazir* had told a falsehood: that he had *not* hired the house, but, knowing it to be empty, intended to take possession of it as a retirement for wine-drinking and such irregular pleasures as he dared not enjoy at his own lodgings within the palace.

I had proposed to myself a stroll this evening to look at some of my old haunts; but a person who came on the part of Mahomed Reza Khan, the Vizier, declared that his master intended to call upon me, and I therefore did not choose to be out of the way. Whether my friend had only spoken from conjecture I cannot tell, but the Vizier came not; and his *envoyé sat down upon* me during the whole evening with the most imperturbable perseverance, until at last, perfectly enraged at the intrusion, I rose up and desired the Meerza to give the man a hint that such close attention was neither expected nor liked by Europeans. It was well that I took the step, for it appeared that the incubation of to-day was but a prelude to good things to come. He declared that having by the Vizier been instructed to attend upon me, he considered it his duty to come every morning early and brood over me thus till night, hoping by such unremitting attention to earn a title to a very handsome reward on leaving me. The Meerza very speedily undeceived him as to the grounds of his hopes, and

intimated that the amount of any consideration he might receive would probably be influenced by such conduct in a ratio directly the reverse of what he seemed to expect: the consequence was his immediate disappearance, and we have not seen him since, except when called for.

Early this morning I sallied forth with a guide, for I found I could not do without one, so much had the place been changed, or my memory failed me. I passed through the same bazârs which I had so often traversed; I even walked close to my old habitation, but I could not discover the exact spot, although most of the objects around became gradually familiarized to my recollection. The bazâr was scarcely open; but I made my way to the *Sahn*, or great square, once forbidden to me,—now open to all Europeans; but I scarcely knew it again; all its beauty was gone; its glory had departed. The gilding was dimmed or smirched; the tiles in many places had fallen off, leaving great clayey gaps in the middle of the rich gold work. The beautiful lackered work of glazed tiles, resembling vivid mosaic, here called *Câshee*, had been rubbed or worn off beneath, and in many places had peeled from the walls to a great extent, betraying the bricks and mud. All the glitter and brilliance which formerly made the place look like a *bijou* fresh from the maker's hand had vanished, leaving but a patched and shabby-looking ruin behind. The beautiful minaret of azure and gold erected by Shah Ismael, had been so shook or damaged, that for fear of its falling they had taken it down; and the splendid azure-lettered inscrip-

tions on the neck of the golden dome, were turned to a dusty grey. The beautiful gateways at either end of the Sahn had suffered a corresponding dilapidation. The tiles were everywhere peeling off, and the freshness of their colours quite tarnished. Even the exquisite *succah-kaneh*, or water-house, in the centre of the square, constructed of a kind of filigree work in gilded wood, was falling to pieces, and all its gilding was gone.

A like degree of *delabrement* was observable in all the public buildings; they were tumbling to pieces without exception. Not one was in decent repair; not a caravanserai nor a medressa was there which did not afford visible proofs of the spoiler's hand; and twelve years seemed insufficient to account for the rapid progress and great extent of decay. The college commenced by the present King, in some of his more pious and less miserly moments, had been left just as when I last saw it, so far as the monarch was concerned; but time and weather had been more active, and made woeful gaps and desperate approaches even to utter demolition. As to inhabitants it had none, except some miserable outcasts, who, having no home of their own, took shelter in its half-ruined cells as beasts do in their dens. Nor were the symptoms of adversity among the inhabitants less striking than in their dwellings. In the bazâr many shops were shut up altogether. In the Sahn, which used to be crowded, scarcely one was occupied. I went to the caravanserai Uzbeckee, where I used often to go and sit with an old friend, Caleb Allee Mervee; but there was not a dozen of its chambers tenanted;

that of Shah Verdee Khan, the best and most frequented in Mushed, was undergoing a very partial repair. In fact, everything I saw seemed, like the country itself, crumbling rapidly into decay.

To witness all this, as I did, in the compass of a morning's walk, was lamentable enough; but it was nothing to the heart-rending scene which a similar stroll in the evening presented. On first entering the city, I had remarked, both in the avenues leading to the gates for the length of a fursuck outside, and in the streets and lanes through which I passed, a prodigious number of beggars; but I had no conception of the swarms that really existed here. Hundreds and thousands of the most miserably squalid objects beset every approach to the shrine, waylaying the pilgrims who flock to worship, principally in the evening. Old men and women in the most abject states of want, and wretchedness, and sickness, pressed upon us at every step, beseeching for relief in the name of all the Imauns; but what was that — what was all the misery of manhood, or even of age, to the sufferings of withering childhood and helpless infancy! The way was actually strewed with creatures that could not, many of them, be more than from three to four years old; not standing or sitting by the wayside, but grovelling in the dust and dirt, naked, like the vermin we were treading under foot. Living skeletons they were; more like the starved young of animals than human creatures; there they lay, strewed in the very paths, so that you could scarcely help trampling on them; some crying and sending forth piteous petitions, with

their little half-quenched voices, for help—for bread! others silent, lying like dead things, or only giving symptoms of life by the sobs that would now and then issue from their little breasts, or the shudders of pain that shook their wasted frames. Some sat, listless and motionless, with half-closed eyes, and countenances on which death seemed already to have put his seal; while the wolf-like glare from the sunken eyes of others, gave terrible evidence of the pangs of hunger which gnawed them. Many of these wretched little creatures could not, as I have said, be more than from three to four years old; yet, though hardly able to speak, and left at that infantine age, alone in the world, to live or to die—deprived, by accident or famine, of all relatives, misery and want seemed to have sharpened their faculties to an astonishing degree of precocity, for you heard them squeaking out sounds which conveyed a petition for food. "Has this miserable little creature no one to look after it?" asked I of some bystanders in one of these pathways, and pointing to a thing which lay, utterly naked, in the dust, more like a large frog, or a starved puppy, than one of the children of men. "Who should it have but God?" was the reply. "Good Heavens!" said I, "is it lying here to die, then?"—"Oh no, they don't die." "How?—what does it do?—how does it live, then?" said I. "The passers-by give it a piece of copper money, or a bit of bread," said one of the men, "and at night it creeps into a hole; there are hundreds, ay, thousands, that do the same: see what a number of them are about us now." "But how can *that* infant know the use of money?"

said I. "Oh! well enough," replied he; "give it a copper coin, and it will go and get bread." I gave the creature a little piece of silver, and it clutched it with a grasp that sufficiently proved it to be accustomed to the use of money, and uttered some sound which it had probably been taught, as indicative of thanks: but it remained still lying where it was, I know not whether from weakness, or waiting for similar donations from others; for by this time a perfect multitude of the most miserable and disgusting objects that imagination can conceive had gathered round me—tottering old women, whose rags scarce covered a fifth part of their frames; men, both old and young, perfect walking skeletons; blear-eyed boys and girls carrying things like starved cats in their arms, all squalling out for bread or money. What I had I gave, and then made away with all speed from the sight of wretchedness which I had no power to relieve or even to alleviate; for the numbers rendered all present aid unavailing, and the Orientals, though generally charitable, have no sort of system in their mode of bestowing alms. For half a mile was I pursued by this crowd of spectres, but though at last I made my escape from their sight, it was far less easy to escape from the sickness of heart which so extraordinary an exhibition of human misery had created. To witness the sufferings of men and women is bad enough,—but that of childhood—of helpless infancy, particularly when to relieve it is beyond one's power, is what I cannot endure. Never shall I forget this day in Mushed.

Of the objects I have described, many are the sad remains—the wives and children of the Toorkomans,

who were killed at Serrakhs, a town on the borders of the great Northern Desert, which I have already mentioned as having been taken and sacked some three years ago by the Prince Royal. Of three or four thousand prisoners the majority were women and children, who, after the rest were ransomed, having no husbands, nor fathers, nor brothers to ransom or protect them, and no homes to go to, remained thus helpless and penniless in the place to which their captors had brought them. Here, unprovided with the means of subsistence, they continued a burthen on the city, where they dragged out their miserable existence by beggary, or, possibly, by thieving. A two years' famine, or a dearth nearly amounting to famine, relieved it of many, but reduced numbers of the inhabitants to a like miserable condition; and they are the children not only of the Toorkomans, but of the towns-men who died of want or of disease, that now linger out their miserable lives in the way I have described—slowly sinking into that grave where their parents have at least found rest. Heavily indeed have the Serrakhsees paid for the woes which they have helped to inflict on Persia. Multitudes perished in defence of their homes; and I have heard my friend Macneil give a dreadful account of the miseries endured by the prisoners,—for all the surviving inhabitants, to the number of more than three thousand, were brought to Mushed in chains.

Of these the greater part were confined in the Oosbeck caravanserai, where Macneil found them huddled together in a dreadful state, in want of everything, not having had a morsel to eat for days.

They surrounded him immediately, and the heart-rending appeals of all, particularly of the women and children, drove him with a bleeding heart to the presence of the young Prince Khosroo Meerza, at that time governor of the city, whom he had known from his childhood. His vigorous representations at last wrung from the Prince or his minister the means of a present supply,—a great matter at the time, when bread was scarcely to be had for the troops,—and Macneil, having himself emptied the bakers' shops, carried the food to the starving Toorkomans. Hunger is selfish, and there was a rush, as you may suppose, towards the food, in which the strongest pressed first to be relieved; but when Macneil addressed himself to the men, mingling his remonstrances with some taunts at their impatience, and entreaties that they should keep back till the women were served, they all, and at once obeyed, retreated, and gave place to their poor women and starving children; nor did they again come forward until called to receive their portion.

Many of these died of hunger and misery where they were—others were ransomed, and you have seen the fate of the rest. Heavy are the ills which the Toorkomans have heaped on Khorasan, and well have they deserved punishment; but the infliction of so lingering, so dreadful, and so indiscriminate a retribution, is surely more than belongs to man. It is only to that Being, who visits the sins of the fathers upon the children, that belongs such terrible vengeance, and we must regard the author of these calamities as but an instrument in his hands.

A singular and somewhat touching incident, con-

nected with these Toorkomans, occurred at this time. Dr. Gerrard, who was at Mushed when the prisoners were brought in, recognized among them a young man, who had been the instrument of preserving the liberty, if not the lives, of Captain Burnes and himself. It appears, that during the passage of these gentlemen through the Desert, from Bockhara to Mushed, it had been deliberated in this young man's tribe, whether they should be seized or permitted to pass; upon which he instantly stepped forward, drew his sword and said, that if the slightest molestation was to be offered to these persons it must be after putting *him* to death, for that *he* was pledged for their safety, and would redeem his pledge should it cost him his life. Macneil, without hesitation, applied to the Prince Royal for the release of this individual, as a boon that would be very gratifying to his Royal Highness's English friends, and which might prove the cause of saving lives in future in similar cases, and the Prince at once complied. Some time afterwards Macneil saw the young man along with Dr. Gerrard, and congratulated him on his escape, while applauding him for the conduct that had obtained it; but he was surprised to find the young Toorkoman by no means responded to his congratulations, and on inquiring the cause he replied, "You have set me at liberty — but of what value is that to me while there remain in bonds at Mushed my father and mother, old people — two more of my father's wives—the widow and child of my brother, who was killed—and my own wife and child?—I cannot leave them, and of what use is liberty to me?" This was a touching and interesting

tale; but what hope was there that the Prince, who was bitter against the Toorkomans, would listen to a request for the release of so many? Macneil was staggered, but at length resolved, at least, to mention the circumstance to his Royal Highness, and state the young man's resolution not to abandon them. It is gratifying to think that his boldness was successful. The Prince, to his honour, on hearing the story, inquired, "Has the young man any more of his relations here?—if so, let him name them, for every one he declares to belong to him shall be free—he deserves it for his spirit and right feeling." Then, sending for the youth, he said, "Remember, my friend, it is the English that have set you at liberty, not me. I have done it for their sakes—but you seem to be a fine trustworthy fellow; here is a *rukum** from me—if you choose to earn an honest livelihood by bringing in caravans as guide and guard, *Bismillah!* this will protect you—but mind my words, if you are caught *chuppowing*, you shall have no more mercy shown you than another."

Well were it for all parties if the Toorkomans would but take warning by the example made at Serrakhs. But this is far from being the case. The Tekehs of Alhâk, and the Thejen, although severely handled in several affairs, and particularly by Nujjeff Allee Khan, of Boojnoord, return continually in parties of from fifty to a thousand, or even in still stronger bodies, especially since the death of the Prince Royal, and have repeatedly plundered several districts, carrying off the inhabitants as slaves. Even

* Rukum, a royal grant or appointment.

the Toorkomans from Merve, and the neighbourhood of Serrakhs, have come again in such force as to alarm the good folks of Mushed, who shut their gates in sheer fright. On several occasions they have been met with and beaten, and lost a good many prisoners; but still they return to the charge, for the plundering trade is too profitable to be lightly abandoned. The late Prince Royal, resolved to check this inhuman warfare, determined to give no quarter to those who were taken prisoners; and on one occasion, when about forty were brought into Mushed, among whom were many persons of wealth and distinction, he ordered them all to be put to death. Deputies from the tribes offered great sums for their ransom, as they stood surrounded with soldiers in the court before the palace; but the Prince was deaf to all entreaty. He declared he would have no dealings with sellers of men; so, making a sign to the serbauz, they fell upon the unfortunate captives, and literally hewed them to pieces before the eyes of the deputies. The repetition of such examples did, assuredly, check the Toorkoman chappows for a time; but, after his death, they soon recommenced, and just about the time I passed Abbassabad a party from that place of two hundred plundered a village not very far distant. On their return, however, they were met by Nujjuff Allee Khan, who took twenty-two prisoners, with a number of horses, and sent eight heads of slain to the Prince at Mushed. Only yesterday, too, we heard that a party of four hundred, who went to chappow in the direction of Toorbut, had been followed and defeated, losing several of their number, prisoners as well as killed.

Unfortunately, the two Persian commanders are said to have been wounded and carried off prisoners by the Toorkomans—this does not look much like victory. In short, Khorasan is in a sad condition, and to reduce and re-organize it will require more discretion and resolution than I fear its rulers possess.

8th June.—The day before yesterday I went, by appointment, to breakfast with the Vizier, Mahomed Rezakhan; from whence, after a meal, capital *à-la-mode de Perse*, I went to pay my respects to the Prince, Kahraman Meerza, full younger brother to Mahomed Meerza, at present governor of the city, and, indeed, of the province, in his brother's absence. I was introduced with less ceremony than usual, for it was a sort of private audience, and I found him a fine pleasing young man, exceedingly disposed to be gracious, yet scarcely knowing how to conduct himself with strangers. He cannot, indeed, be above twenty or twenty-one years of age; for his beard is scarcely out, and he certainly is not yet competent to the high duties he has to perform. But all Persian noblemen, Princes included, are remarkable for self-possession, good manners, and an early acquaintance with the conventional forms of society and distinction of rank. So he went readily enough through the customary routine of polite phrases; hoped that I was well and comfortable, and would remain his guest as long as I pleased, &c. &c.; but as for conversation there was but little attempt at it, and, in truth, in these visits of ceremony there is seldom much opportunity for anything of the sort. Luckily for me an officer arrived to my aid, with accounts of the affair of Toorbut, which I have

already mentioned, and which occupied the attention of all present. You may imagine, that in an account given to a prince of the success of a party of his troops, truth was not likely to stand in the way, especially if disagreeable; so that I took what I heard in with some grains of allowance. It appeared that the Toorkomans, after having struck their blow, made off and were pursued by a party of serbauz, or regular infantry, together with some irregular horse. These intercepted the robbers, encumbered with booty, at a place called *Pool-e-khatoon*, or the "Ladies' Bridge," and attacked them, it is said, with so much effect, that they were put to flight, with the loss of several killed and some prisoners. But it so fell out that the two commanders, Allee Khan and Mehdee Koolee Khan, who were standing on a height, with only a few men, encouraging their soldiers, were surprised by a party of the Toorkomans, and, along with several other people, made prisoners, Mehdee Koolee Khan having been severely wounded. It is asserted that several of the Toorkomans were killed, and others made prisoners. Now, according to savage custom, all heads of the slain are brought in to be laid at the foot of the Prince, but neither living nor dead have made their appearance, and only three sorry jades of horses, probably left behind when worn out: so that I suspect this is only a victory Persian fashion, which is something very like a defeat: truth will come out at last. Having listened to a grand discussion on this brilliant affair, I looked at the master of ceremonies, who relieved both the Prince and myself, for it appeared his Royal Highness scarcely

knew how to give the signal of dismission; but, on taking leave, he very kindly bid me come to the Salaam and see him as often as I pleased.

Next morning I paid a more interesting visit. It was to an old friend, Caleb Allee Meroee, a merchant, who had been very kind to me when I was here before. Old, indeed, I may well call him; for he was now on the verge of ninety years, yet in perfect possession of his memory and mental faculties. When he knew who I was he received me with most affectionate cordiality, and bade me welcome a thousand times. He was seated in a pleasant little chamber overlooking a court filled with roses and green shrubs, and shaded with fruit trees, where now, freed from the cares of business, he passes his time, surrounded by his grandchildren. We soon got talking of old times, but it was a melancholy conversation; for of those I had known here how few remained in life, and of those who did remain how changed was the condition! At last the old man begged me to say no more about the matter, for his heart was broken by the state of the country, and the fate of those it had contained. The country, he said, from famine and misrule, was utterly destroyed—he knew it, but he could not help it, and why should he vex his latter days by dwelling on irremediable evils? For his part he went out little, perhaps once a week to the mosque, and left alone as he was, why should he meddle with the affairs of others?

In speaking of the late Prince Royal, Caleb Allee, perhaps from knowing the interest taken by the English in his Royal Highness, spoke only in terms

of praise. He lamented his premature death as of one who had at heart the welfare of Khorasan, and would have laboured to restore its prosperity; he scouted the idea that Mahomed Meerza could ever supply his father's place. But it was upon the Kaymookam that the weight of his anger fell; that minister, he said, thought only of raising money, indifferent as to the means of doing so, or to the extent of misery these means might inflict, or whether the country were depopulated by them or not. He denied the excessive turbulence of the nobles, or that they never would be contented with a master—give them Hassan Allee Meerza, or the *Firmaun Firmace* of Fars, and they would be contented. I listened, but to these positions I could not agree; for I am sure that if they do like either of these princes, it is because they think they would be more their masters than their subjects.

On the same evening, and the succeeding morning, I paid two other visits of a similar nature. One was to Meerza Reza, the Vizier of Reza Koolee Khan, of Khabooshan, with whom I had been very intimate during my former stay with that chief. The other was to Ismael Beg, the Khan's principal sirdar or general, and my mehmander during my residence at Khabooshan. Both these visits were of the same melancholy cast as that to Caleb Allee, for both my friends had fallen from their palmy state, and distress and illness, no less than years, had borne heavily on each. Whatever may be the truth, Meerza Reza assumes the appearance of poverty in his establishment and personal appearance, for he lives in a ruinous tumble-down house, with nothing of com-

fort about him. Certainly he cannot have the power or the means which he enjoyed as factotum of Reza Koolee Khan; but I should have supposed he had laid up enough for the evil day, as *he* did not share his master's fate. The truth is, that the Meerza stands suspected of having connived at the destruction of his former master with his enemies; and though he escaped the consequences of adhering to a falling cause at the time, he probably has experienced, like others in similar cases, that "we hate the traitor while we hug the treason," and that his ill-earned favour with his new master quickly fell into the yellow leaf. He attends at the salam, and stands in the presence as *nudeem* or *hum sohbut* (that is companion) of the Prince, but enjoys little influence or respect. He received me with great kindness, but I could not talk to him with equal freedom as to the true and honest Caleb Allee, to whom nothing of guile or suspicion attaches, and who is in no way mixed up with the intrigues of the place.

With Ibrahim Beg it was different. He was a brave soldier, and fought to the last faithfully, so that there was no drawback to the pleasure with which I met him, and it seemed to be reciprocal; for the old man expressed his delight at seeing me repeatedly, and with fervour. It was a meeting, he said, so totally unexpected; he had made so many inquiries about me in vain. "And now, at last," said he, "you have brought light to my eyes, and joy to my heart." I do not think I have mentioned to you the fate of his master, my old friend and entertainer, Reza Koolee Khan. When the late Prince Royal entered Khorasan, and summoned its

chiefs to submit themselves to his authority, and come to court and do service as liege subjects, several of the leading ones in the north, fearing to commit themselves, and possibly not rightly estimating the Prince's power, held off, and would do neither one thing nor other. Of these Reza Koolee was the principal, and by far the most powerful; he was also the most simple-hearted. The rest promised him their assistance in case of his holding out against the royal arms; but when the time came, he found himself forced to fight the battle almost alone. His relative, Nujjuff Allee Khan, who was likewise connected with him by marriage, sent him indeed three hundred horsemen; but they were withdrawn on some pretext or other at the moment when they were most required. The royal troops were making great progress in the siege of Khabooshan itself; a mine was sprung which made a practicable breach; and the assault was ordered, when Reza Koolee Khan was persuaded to surrender, and accept the royal grace. Hostages were required and given; but, after a while, the Khan himself was taken, and sent, first to Tehran, and then to Tabreez. What share in these proceedings was taken by Meerza Reza, I do not exactly know; it was said, and I believe with truth, that his master was, to a certain extent, deranged, and that this consideration weighed in determining his conduct; but this cannot excuse treachery. As to Reza Koolee Khan, disappointment and chagrin, acting on an already disordered brain, brought on an illness, of which he died at or near Miana, before reaching Tabreez. Nujjuff Allee Khan made terms, and of-

fered service; and Mahomed Khan Karawee, who held out for some time longer, gave in at last, surrendered his strongholds, and is now a state-prisoner in the ark of Tabreez. These were the three foremost chiefs of northern Khorasan, whose story, were it given in more detail, would not be found devoid of interest.

Of Mahomed Khan Karawee I have been assured, on the best authority, that he is one of the most polite and best-bred gentlemen possible, gifted with the highest and most varied powers of conversation, particularly well versed in Persian literature, as well as in the Korân—a knowledge which he fails not to turn to account on all available occasions. So persuasive and insinuating is he said to be in his address, that he rarely fails of attaining his ends by dint of eloquence and impressive appeals; yet this peculiar mildness and fascinating softness of manner serves but as a veil to the most unprincipled perfidy and treachery. He is said to be the most wantonly cruel and capricious villain alive. There is not the smallest dependence to be placed on his word, and it was his well-known constant practice to invite guests, receive them with hospitality and kindness, dismiss them with favour, and yet to send forth a party to waylay and plunder them. Of this there are many instances, but I heard none particularly worth relating. Of his fiendish and wanton cruelty the following two traits may suffice. There is a particular mode of hunting practised in Persia, in which antelopes, or stags, being found, are driven towards a person who lies concealed, and who thus has an opportunity of getting a shot at them. Mahomed

Khan one day had gone forth to hunt in this manner, and had concealed himself behind a rock, towards which his horsemen were driving the deer, when a poor villager, who had gone out to the Sahra to gather fuel, and who had fallen asleep beside his load, aroused by the noise and outcry of the hunters, started up in amazement and frightened away the game. Up sprang the Khan in a passion, and without more ado ordered the man to be bound on his load, and the load to be set on fire, and there they held him till he was burned to death.

On another occasion, when in the bath, his bathing attendant, or barber, took the opportunity to dilate to the Khan upon the straitened state of his circumstances, and to complain sadly of his large family, for whom he was at the greatest loss to provide. "How many have you?" inquired the Khan. "Nine or ten," whined the barber. "Well, bring them to me when I leave the bath, and I will see whether I cannot provide for some of them," said the Khan. Away went the barber, overjoyed at what he doubted not was a grand stroke of good fortune: but it so happened that, with the view of exaggerating his distress, and further moving the Khan's compassion, he had overstated the number of his progeny; so, to make up the tale, he borrowed from his relatives a sufficient number, and carried them, as well as his own, to wait upon the Khan. "*Barikillah!*" said the Khan, casting his eye upon the children, "you have done well. Are these all?"—"All, protector of the poor," responded the shaver. "Very well," said the Khan, and beckoning to an agent of the Toorkomans, who was by,

coolly sold the whole lot to him before the poor man's eyes. The real parents, as well as the barber himself, were too much thunderstruck at first to speak or move; but when the Toorkoman merchant began to lead their little ones away, they awoke from their trance and the truth came out. "These are *our* children!" cried they: "dust on our heads! they are ours—give us them back!" "No, no!" said the Khan, "that's nonsense; they are the barber's, they are all the barber's—he is happy, no doubt, poor man, to be so well rid of them."

My friend, Reza Koolee Khan, comparatively honest and simple-hearted as he was, appears occasionally to have been capable of playing some curious tricks, in what he, no doubt, held to be his trade, namely, plunder. The brother of the late King of Oude, by name Jelall-u-deen Khan, was passing through the northern part of Khorasan on his way to Kerbelah. He was known to be in possession of some very valuable jewels, but he was met by a party of Toorkomans, plundered of all he had, and taken prisoner. Reza Koolee Khan hearing of this, sent with all haste to have him released, paid a high ransom for him, and having brought him to Khabooshan, treated him with the greatest distinction, furnished him with horses, and servants, and fitting apparel, and sent him on his way rejoicing. This generous act coming to the ears of the British envoy, he sent a letter to the Khan conveying his thanks, in the name of his government, for his attention to a friend of the English. Some time afterwards it came out, and was proved beyond dispute, that Reza Koolee Khan himself had

instigated or sent the Toorkomans to waylay the Nawâb, and had come in for the lion's share of the plunder, at the very moment he seemed using his power to assist his highness: the story of the ransom, of course, was all "*fudge*." Nevertheless, I lamented the fate of Reza Koolee Khan, for however rude and unpolished, or false to others, he had been kind and hospitable to me, and was, on the whole, a kind, good-hearted man.

On the whole, these were two days of melancholy reminiscences; melancholy by contrast of the present with the past. I strolled to the Char Baugh, my first lodging when I was Meerza Moossa's guest of yore; assuredly, there was nothing left by which I could recognise it. I made my way over a mass of shapeless ruins, through passages that once led to courts and suites of apartments, and found myself at length in an extensive piece of ground full of rank weeds, among which some fine old chinârs and fruit-trees were still flourishing. In the middle of it were the walls of what had been a pleasure or summer house, where the occupant of these gardens once used to retire to rest from the fervent heat of noon; its roof had fallen in, and a few pieces of broken wood pointed out where its windows had been. This was my old lodging; and though cold in winter, might be a sweet enough retirement in summer: but it was gone. I turned to the right, where, above a gateway, had been the cheerful little *khelwut* where I used to dine or sit with Meerza Moossa. I saw a ruined wall and a heap of bricks and rubbish; behind was a

still greater maze of broken walls, which had been those of his *anderoon* and harem.

In one part of the garden I saw a man employed, with an iron hook in the almost hopeless task of clearing a little spot of earth from the gigantic weeds that grew there. He told me he was the gardener; that he was trying to make a clean spot for some vegetables, in order to give food to his family, for he could get nothing else to give them. He had been seven years in that garden, he said, but for the last four he had received no wages, and had no means of getting bread. The fruit had failed, and had there been any crop there was no one to buy it: the scarcity had deprived men of the means to procure even the necessaries of life. "Why," said I, "do you go on working without wages? why not remove to some better place?" "Where is it?" was the reply; "all places are alike, or worse to me; and many of us rather stay here and die, than make an attempt to leave their old homes: we have neither the heart nor the strength to move." While we were speaking, a pretty little girl, of about seven, came up crying, and taking hold of her father's knees, said something to him which I did not understand. "There," said he, "she is one of six; she is asking for bread, and I have none to give her; she is hungry, poor thing; so are they all; they have had nothing to-day, and I have nothing for them; everything I had I have sold to buy food. I had carpets, and numuds, and clothes, but piece by piece all went; then I sold our mattresses, and next the coverlids; we have

nothing to cover us now; see, I have no shoes—nothing on my feet—and, look at her!" In truth the poor little thing was almost naked. "At last," continued he, "I was forced to sell even the lock that was on my door, and then the door itself. I have nothing left now. God is great!"

Now this man was no beggar; he never asked for money; never hinted at his poverty till I entered into the story of his occupations, and drew him out. It was a place where no strangers were likely to come; he could have expected no one; therefore, it was no scene got up for show. When I gave the little girl some money, the man looked surprised, and bade her kiss my hand. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of persons in a similar condition—enough and to spare of such distress in Mushed. I have seen a good deal of Persia, but I never witnessed anything like it before there or elsewhere.

In the afternoon of this day the minister paid me a visit. I was out when he arrived, but soon came home, and found him busy in an active survey of all my things. He had ferreted out my fishing rod, and had even managed to put it up. He had examined my guns and pistols, and had already taken a liking to one of the former and a pair of the latter, and he began to talk of bargaining with me for a horse; but I told him I was rather out of conceit with fine and expensive horses, having found that snug compact animals of inferior value did their work much better. I took this opportunity of talking with the Khan about an object which I have much at heart; and it is no less than visiting

and becoming acquainted with these savage Toorkomans, the Tekehs in particular, in their own desert, and their own tents there. My plan is to get some of my friends here, who I know did of old, and probably still do, maintain a degree of intercourse with the chiefs of the Attock, to give me introductions and pledges for my security before I venture into their power. I had already propounded this project to Caleb Allee, Meerza Reza, and Ismael Beg, who, I must say, did not give me much encouragement There is a certain Yelantoosh Khan, one of the few remaining border-chiefs of this province, a sort of amphibious link between the Koords and Toorkomans, who lives in his castle and naturally fortified valley of Kelaut, — the celebrated stronghold of Nadir Shah,—and keeps in a medium state between rebellion and obedience. It is from this or from another, Abbas Koolee Khan, of Deregez, that I hope for a welcome and assistance; and from the friends I have mentioned I solicited advice, and their opinion as to the prudence of trusting to these worthies, and of the chance of safety I should have in committing myself to the care and hospitality of the wanderers of the Attock and desert. The reply from all was nearly the same. "To go to the Toorkoman country without introductions and pledges for your security, would be madness. Perhaps Yelantoosh Khan may be able to send you there with safety if he wishes it; but it is very probable that he may decline your visit altogether from jealousy, lest you should be coming as a spy; but whether he may be able to send you further or not, if he says 'Bismillah!' you may trust yourself to him."

When I proposed the scheme to the Vizier, he told me that on the morrow he himself was going to meet Yelantoosh Khan, who had come from Kelaat; that on his entering the place, I should have the means of learning from himself the practicability of my plan. That if the Khan, sent me to Kelaat while he himself should remain in Mushed, all would be well, and he did not seem to anticipate any objection on the part of that chief to permit me to stay a night at Kelaat on my way to the Attock. Till the result of this conference between the minister and the chief is known, however, and till the temper of the chief towards myself is ascertained, I cannot determine on my future proceedings. There is one Moollah Mehdee here, a Jew, and the Ketkhodah, or chief of the Hebrew quarter in Mushed, who, I believe, is likely to stand me in better stead as an adviser and assistant than any man in the place. He was recommended to me by my friend B——. Jews have dealings, and consequently access, everywhere, and being necessary as brokers and merchants to all classes of people, they have their brethren or agents, and are known and have influence in all quarters; and if any man could introduce me safely among these savages of the Desert, or ransom me if unfortuately taken, it would be Moollah Mehdee. To him I applied on this occasion; but his advice and opinion were much like that of the rest. "Do not venture without a sufficient pledge; if that is given, then, Bismillah!" Now I am a little at a loss about this: neither on public nor private grounds should I choose to run more risk, and yet the object is worth a struggle. The upshot of the matter is

delay; but Persia is the country of delay—I cannot hope to change it.

11th June.—My birthday, remembered for once; I dare say it will not be forgotten at ——— if all be well there, which God grant. Nor will ———, who has a great fancy for putting me in mind that I am no chicken, forget to tell you my exact age. Alas! I need no other information on that subject than the very intelligible hints which advancing years convey to all. Perfect as my health is, thank God, and sound in wind and limb as I feel, it is certain that neither mind nor body can boast of the same elasticity and play which they possessed some ten or twelve years ago; and though I may sometimes believe that this imagined slowness is the effect of fancy, I fear truth would tell another tale—that it is all in the course of nature, and neither matter of astonishment nor concern further than as a warning of the lapse of time, and the necessity of preparation for more serious changes still.

Yesterday I had a specimen of the tricks of my friends the Persians upon travellers. Having a few spare hours, and hearing that the Mushed river, about half a fursuck distance, was full of fish, I proposed taking my fishing rod there in the afternoon to try and catch some of them. On reaching the gates of the city, however, I was stopped: it appeared, that in consequence of the number of persons of distinction who are now here, either in confinement or in the condition of hostages, no one is permitted to leave the city without a written order from the colonel or the officer commanding the troops on guard. An application for this document occa-

sioned a delay, which prevented my fishing expedition for that day, but which brought me a visit from the *serheng*, or colonel of the regiment of serbauz in charge of the gates. He came attended by a gallant tail of a dozen fellows, who all entered my apartment. Next morning, when I arose to go forth on my piscatory expedition, and looked for my rod and fishing reel, which had lain in a niche of the apartment, behold! both were gone, and no one had been here besides the said colonel and his people. There is no doubt that some of these had imagined it to be a spying-glass, (it was in a leathern case,) and carried it off, and as yet I have heard nothing of it.

Disappointed of my fishing, I went out to stroll about the town. In passing through a finely ornamented though small square, in front of the beautiful mosque of Gauher Shahed, among the various squalid objects that were soliciting charity, or rather a little removed to one side under an archway, I observed one or two persons bending over two objects on the pavement. These were two infants, one of which was perhaps two years old, the other not one; both were gaunt with famine, and a man was trying to feed them, awkwardly enough, with some sort of pottage which he held in a bowl. I went up to discover what he was about, and on asking whose children they were, he told me, "Heaven only knew;" he had seen them there lying in the sun, covered with flies—that he had removed them into the shade, and was trying to feed them—"but I am only a poor pilgrim, sir—what can I do?—God help the poor things!" As he said this, up came two

women in their châders or veils, and many were their exclamations of pity and sympathy as they looked at the little creatures trying to suck in the food they required so much, but which the good pilgrim was rather unskilfully presenting to them. The elder of these women made some attempts to assist, but upon moving the younger infant and finding the little creature in a very filthy condition, she desisted — "Ah!" said she; "I would have taken the poor thing home, but how can I even touch it? —it is *nejis*," (unclean,) and away she went. Assuredly, I honoured her sense of cleanliness more than the fervor of her charity. I tried to find out whether the poor infants had any parent, as it was impossible they could have conveyed themselves there; but whoever had placed them in that spot, they would not avow it even when called upon with the offer of money—so I left what I could with the charitable pilgrim, who, as well as a passer-by, promised to have them looked after, which *I* was unable to do myself. I understood that such an exposure of infants in spots where they must attract the attention of passengers, was often had recourse to by those who were unable to feed either themselves or their offspring.

Shocked at the constant recurrence of these scenes, I inquired whether no charge was taken either by the authorities of the city, or the priests of the shrine, or by the executive government, of the multitude of starving creatures that haunt the streets and throng the public places of Mushed. I was answered that nothing of the sort was attempted, that the people of the place did actually nothing—

they were callous to the constant sight of misery—that neither prince nor minister would do anything—that the *mootwullee* and leading moollahs of the shrine, thought of nothing but making themselves comfortable, and that the only relief which the poor objects of the place and those which flocked to it from far and near, received, was from the pilgrims who visit the shrine in great crowds, and who, continually arriving and departing, brought with them an unfailing, if not a very plenteous or effectual stream of charity.

This afternoon I had a number of visitors, among others, a *yauver*, or major of artillery, the Topechee Bashee, or commandant in Mushed, who entertained me with a most animated account of his own gallant deeds in the Prince's campaigns. This officer is a brave soldier, I am told, but so notorious for gasconading, that the late Prince Royal used frequently to amuse himself at his expense. On one occasion when Assad-Oollah Khan, the name in which the hero rejoices, was reporting some exploit of his men to the Prince, and was descanting on his own and their valour, he wound up his encomium by declaring, by the head of the Shazadeh, that he was unequal to do them justice—that *Shah Nameh* himself alone could do that personifying the poem instead of its author, Ferdousee. "Mashallah!" exclaimed his Royal Highness; "no need of that: Assad Oollah Khan is worth twenty *Shah Nameh*s himself."

Another was a more interesting visitor. You may remember that during my former stay at this place, as I was sitting one evening in my munzil, a person came in and addressed me by saying in English:

"Good morning, sir!" and afterwards proved an agreeable acquaintance: well, this very afternoon in walks my old friend Moolla Eussuff, with his "good morning, sir," to my no small pleasure. This man had once been employed in an English office at Bombay, where he acquired a few words of the language, and a strong predilection for English ways and English money; and it was his intention, when I last saw him, to return to enjoy the sweets of Bombay official dignity again. "But," said he, "my friends here all got round me, and my mother and my brothers; and they entreated me, and brought me a wife—the daughter of that Moollah Abdool Wàhâb with whom you used to hold astronomical disputations before the Prince twelve years ago. Well, I married her—next came children; that settled the matter. The mother and the brothers I could have got free of; but the wife and the young ones, that was a chain I could not break,—so away went my Bombay projects, and here I am, teaching in the Medressa and praying in the mosques of Mushed." I afterwards went and saw Meerza Eussuff at his own house. He was on duty in the mosque, but hearing of our visit (my own Meerza was with me) he hurried over prayers, as he told us, and we soon heard him shuffling after us in the street. "Come," said he with a glad air, as we entered his dwelling, in a small court, overshadowed by one fine large mulberry tree, "come in—there 's no one here,—the women are all away to-day—we have the whole house to ourselves—enter freely." And Moollah Eussuff himself, opening the forbidden apartments, bustled about to provide for his friends

with an alacrity which an evil observer might have referred not to hospitality alone, but to a certain relief which he obviously felt from the absence of his better half or halves.

I have just heard of an opportunity for Tehrân, so I shall close this volume of a letter, only to begin another. I fear you are more likely to tire of reading than I of writing; in the mean time God bless you, and grant us a happy meeting in his own good time.

LETTER VIII.

Difficulties. —The Uttâr Bashee. — Yar Mahomed Khan. —Nawâb Hindee. — Shuffling conduct. — Yelantoosh Khan. — A strange introduction.—Cause for caution.—Toorkoman fidelity.

Mushed, 15th June.

A FEW days since, dear ——, I sent off a packet of several closely-written sheets, with some doubts whether they may ever reach your hand — when shall I know?—My movements are as uncertain as ever, and delay is still the order of every day. The principal cause of my detention at present is want of *cash*, a serious evil anywhere, a desperate one here. I have a credit on a merchant here, who admits the validity of the bill, and says, "*Chushm!*" to all I require, but adds, that though I am welcome to a thousand tomauns in goods, he cannot furnish me with *ten* in coin; and what are goods to me?—But patience!

As to my intended route from hence, the direction of which I hinted at in my last, it is still unfixed; my wish was to have gone from hence to Serrakhs, the Toorkoman town which was destroyed by the Prince Royal, but which has already begun to arise again from its ashes, (Toorkoman towns are soon rebuilt,) and from thence to have gone round by what is called the Attock, or skirt of the hills, among the Toorkomans, to Asterabad, far to the

northward of my former route, thus not only getting a glimpse at these curious though dangerous people, and ascertaining somewhat of their feelings towards Europeans generally, but fixing the geography of that hitherto untouched and unknown part of the country. I also hoped, as I have already told you, that in virtue of certain introductions which I possessed to Yelantoosh Khan of Kelaat-e-Naderee, I might get access to that very remarkable place, as yet unvisited by Europeans, and little known even to natives except by fame. I have cause, however, to fear a disappointment in these objects, and this on several accounts. It is on the whole an unlucky juncture for such an enterprise. In the first place, in consequence of the capture of Ameerabad, Khabooshan, and several other places, particularly Serrakhs, effected so much by the assistance of European officers, these have become objects of dislike and fear to the border tribes, and especially to the Toorkomans; so that, without excellent security and guides, it would be highly imprudent to trust ourselves among these semi-savages; and even if such pledges and guides were to be had, the transit from one tribe or camp to another, among people where there are no chiefs of power or consequence, is attended always with hazard and delay.

In the second place, it is confidently asserted that Shujah-ool-Moolk, the ex-King of Caubul, long a recluse at the British station of Loodheana in India, has come forth with great power to assert his claims to the throne again; and he has already got possession of much of the country, including Candahar. This he is said to have accomplished by means of

English assistance and troops, who, it is also affirmed, are still with him; and a thousand idle reports are prevalent regarding the amount of this force. Now the Persians lay claim to certain parts of the Affghaun country, including Kandahar; and silly as the reports may be, it is obvious that not only the people, but the authorities here, are alarmed and annoyed at this supposed aid granted to Shujah. I even can see that this jealousy extends in some degree to myself. The minister Mahomed Reza Khan, indeed, in a conversation which I had with him, lately taxed me flatly with having come to spy out the nakedness of the land, and declared his belief that the English had taken Caubul, and would proceed hither, to meet and fight the Russians, who are, he averred, on their way to India. They were the words of a foolish ignorant man, but they indicated the sore place; and this no doubt may prove a serious stumbling block in my path. Besides, some of my old and well-informed friends in Mushed, assure me that the fact of Shah Shujah's progress has spread consternation even among the Toorkomans, and that it would in consequence be more than ordinarily hazardous for any Frank to appear among them. All disguises are attended with risk, and it is not my business to run any. What I can do in the way of duty I am bound to do, but to render this available I must bring myself safely back: nor am I forgetful of home ties, of those who look for my return; neither do I disregard life so much as to make me careless of personal danger. In fact, I have grown very careful of myself, and shall do nothing that a due regard to duty and

prudence may forbid; so dear —— have no dread for me.

In the mean time my days do not pass without incidents of interest. I was sitting alone one afternoon, half asleep from the intense heat, when one of my servants came running in to tell me that the *Uttâr Bashee* was coming to see me. "And who is the Uttâr Bashee?" you will ask, as I did when I first heard the name, or rather title, for such it is. It means chief apothecary, or druggist, and the person who bears it is a man of great consequence at the court of Herât, having continued for some time past the principal favourite of Prince Kamraun, the present ruler of that city. The cause of the elevation of this person to power, as it was stated to me, is singularly characteristic of the Prince he serves. Kamraun Meerza, who is a capricious and dangerous tyrant, happens also to be very fond of getting drunk, and particularly with an intoxicating preparation of the hemp plant, which in India is called *bang*. Now to such a person the honesty of the individual employed to prepare this narcotic drug must be a matter of primary importance, and such an honest compounder did the ruler of Herât discover in this Uttâr Bashee, who was, until he became honoured with this exalted patronage, an obscure druggist in the bazâr of that city. The excellence of his "stuff," I believe, formed the first attraction, and his honesty or art has been the means of maintaining him ever since high in his master's favour. When Prince Mahomed Meerza after his father's death entered into a treaty with Prince Kamraun; the latter engaged to pay in money-

and goods the amount of a specified number of tomauns; and a certain person of his court, named Yar Mahomed Khan, was accredited from Herât to conclude the negotiations.

Some time afterwards this same Uttâr Bashee was sent with a sum of money and some shawls in part payment of the stipulated sum, but so far short of expectation did it prove, that Yar Mahomed was sent back, attended by a person from this court on the part of Mahomed Meerza, to collect the remainder, while the Uttâr Bashee was courteously detained as a sort of pledge until the money be paid. Such was the personage whom on this occasion I was taught to expect; but it turned out to be only his principal meerza or secretary, who came to pour out his complaints regarding this breach of hospitality, in hopes, I believe, that I could and would take up their cause with government, and procure the restoration of their liberty, with compensation for loss and expenses during their detention; or, if not that, at least a provision for their maintenance here during their compulsory sojourn. Already, according to this person's account, they had spent all their ready cash, and have lived for some time on the sale, first of horses and camels, and then of shawls and ornaments, till now they are reduced to great difficulties. And what could I do? Of course nothing but pity them, and express my sorrow that I could be of no assistance. The Meerza took his leave, requesting to know when it would be convenient for me to receive the chief apothecary himself, who wished to pay his respects. But several days passed without this august visit, and I began to believe that his ex-

cellency, finding he was likely to get nothing more than a cup of tea, had changed his mind. But I was wrong: for at length a poor, shabby-looking, ill-dressed creature, attended by a rabble of grey-eyed Affghans, did come, and paid a mortal visit of two hours, during which he scarcely uttered two sentences, and I scarcely gathered one idea, except from the tongue of his mouth-piece the Meerza, his avant-courier. This gentleman appeared to be at least as much of a romancer as my friend the Commandant of Artillery; and, according to his account, it was well for the Persian (or Kuzzilbash army, as he called it,) that they had him in secret for a friend; they would have been destroyed else in a hundred different ways. His master and he had even incurred the displeasure of Prince Kamraun for this undue partiality to the Kuzzilbashes; "and this," said he, "is my reward,—they keep us prisoners and let us starve." I heartily wished that the worthy Topechee Bashee had been present to hear his gasconades outdone; what an explosion there would have been! three of his own guns would have been nothing to it.

Of Yar Mahomed Khan, the true Vizier and general of Kamraun Meerza, a very different account was given. He is an Alekkozehee, and as brave a man as possible. It was told me, that on a late occasion, when returning with Yahia Khan, an officer of the Prince Royal's, to Herât, and while resting in a caravanserai, a party of Toorkoman horse came galloping in upon their baggage, which they at once began to plunder. Yar Mahomed, who had not more than twelve or fifteen horse, mounted the moment he heard of the attack, and, drawing his sword,

rushed right among the Toorkomans, cutting down all that he came across. The robbers, astonished at the violence of the assault, drew up, halted, and called out, "Who are you, in the devil's name?" A dozen voices called out, "The Vizier, the Vizier!" on which the Toorkomans exclaimed, "We have eaten dirt! we did not know you; for God's sake! take your baggage and leave us alone—we will not molest you." So great is the Vizier's name for courage and prowess in these parts.

On the succeeding day I had another surprise in the visit of a very handsome gentlemanly man, who walked in unannounced, and introduced himself to me as a person who had been much in India, and was well acquainted with many of the *Saheb-logue* there. I did not at first well know what to make of him, but on trying him as to certain individuals I found that he could not be altogether an impostor. I found he was acquainted with Mr. Elphinstone and my brother,* intimately as he assured me; and when I told him that Mr. Fraser of Dehlee was my brother, he started, and declared that he was about to ask me whether he was related to me, the likeness was so strong. Still, however, he waved telling who he was, and after some general conversation he got up and left me.

Next day my new friend returned at the same hour, and soon produced documents which not only

* Chief Revenue Commissioner of the Dehlee territory, and since assassinated there by an agent of the Nawab of Feerozpore, in consequence of certain proceedings, which, as chief magistrate of the Dehlee district, came before Mr. Fraser in the course of his duty, and which were likely to have gone against the Nawab.

declared who he was, but also proved him to be entitled to high consideration. It appeared that he was an Affghaun nobleman, though of Persian origin, whose fathers from the time of Ahmed Shah Abdallee, founder of that dynasty, had held the chief offices in the state; and in the time of Shah Shujah, and the late Mahomed Shah, he himself had filled that of Vizier, or Chief Meerza. In that capacity it would appear he had stood when Mr. Elphinstone arrived at Peshawer, on his mission from the British government of India; and he showed me a paper under that gentleman's hand, declaring not only his rank and station, but that he had always proved himself a firm friend to the English. Of this same letter he had a copy authenticated by Mr. Stirling, Secretary to the Bengal government in the Persian department; and he showed me, moreover, a Persian letter bearing my brother's signature. In short, he seemed to have detected my want of confidence on the preceding day, and to have come resolved to disperse my doubts, and convince me of his being a true man. The name of this gentleman was Hoossein Allee Khan, but he was better known in his own land by that of *Meerza Giraummee Khan*, and in Mushed by the appellation of *Nawab Hindee*—(that is, the Indian Nawab)—and a very fine-looking fellow he is, with a black beard long and thick enough to raise the envy of the Shah himself. We soon became cordial, as you may suppose; and I gained a good deal of information of a very interesting nature regarding the state of Affghanistan and the conterminous countries. One circumstance I listened to with painful interest, for it confirmed my own suspicions

of the death of poor Moorcroft. He said there was no doubt that this gentleman died by poison, and entirely in consequence of his own imprudence in displaying the riches he possessed. "What had he to do," observed the Meerza, "with money, and pearls, and fine horses? He displayed quantities of the two first, and bought many of the last, and so raised the cupidity of the savage Hazâras." A serious and important lesson to all travellers in these lawless regions. "If you do go among these Toorkomans," said he to me, "go as a poor man, and carry nothing with you; take but one servant; live as they do; eat dry bread, and eat it with your servant; wear the Toorkoman dress—that is your only chance—and by so doing there will be little danger. What do they want? It is not your blood, but your property; if you have none of the last, the first runs little risk."

These were pleasant incidents to sweeten much that was vexatious and disappointing. Distress too often, instead of opening the hearts of men, makes them more selfish and hardened. The times are hard here, and have long been so; and I never in any part of the world saw a community so exclusively and shamelessly devoted to the furthering of their own interest by all means—honest or otherwise. Truth appears utterly banished from the place. I cannot trust a word that is said, be it by Khan or Meerza, merchant or tradesman, master or man; not only are professions made, but the most solemn promises given, without a thought of fulfilment. I told you of the letter of credit which I had upon a merchant here—that its validity was acknowledged, and

its value, or ten times as much, proffered in goods. *Mashallah!* Well—this Hadjee, with the most imperturbable gravity, keeps saying "*Chushm*" to my requests—declares I shall have some ducats to-morrow —then swears he has not a tomaun in the house—next says he has sent an express to Nishapore for the amount, but that I must wait ten days for it; and so drives me to the necessity of trying other expedients, which all terminate in further disappointments. Hearing that two gholaums had a parcel of ducats in charge to carry to Tehran—a great risk, as, the fact being known, it afforded a greater temptation for the Toorkomans to attack them,—I offered them my bill, which the Vizier and every one acknowledged to be perfectly good; but no—there was no *profit* to be derived from such a transaction, and neither the minister nor the Hadjee, who heard of the matter, could bear to permit so considerable a sum in gold (it was 150 ducats) to pass by their hands without a pluck. But they quarrelled about the spoil. The gholaums were dissatisfied with the share offered to them, so off they carried the money without further parley, for fear of what might happen, leaving me in the lurch.

The Vizier, to whom I applied, promised by my head and his own soul that I should have all the money I required, if he should pawn his cap for it, and made a thousand and one promises, confirmed with as many oaths; but hitherto not one stiver has been produced. Meerza Giraummee Khan, having heard that I had been applying for money, promised to exert himself to help me, although I know his own circumstances are very far from easy: he hoped

through some Kandahar merchants to procure a sum, but has not yet succeeded. Last night he told me he had spoken to the Vizier on the subject, on which that worthy functionary expressed great surprise.—"How!" said he, "does he want more?—I sent him 150 ducats yesterday!"—This was pretty strong, for unless he alluded to the money which was in the gholaums' hands, and which they carried off, I do not know what he meant.

In the mean time Yelantoosh Khan, by whatsoever arguments persuaded, not only met the Vizier, but actually agreed to come into Mushed, where he was to receive a *khelut*, or dress of honour, from the Prince, and then return to his own country again. The day after their arrival I went to call on the Vizier in the morning, and found Yelantoosh Khan in company. He was a poor-looking man, with Tatar features, small eyes, a reddish yellow complexion, and a disagreeable expression of countenance. After conversing with the Vizier for a while, I begged him to introduce me to Yelantoosh Khan, reminding him of the hopes I entertained from that personage. "By all means," said he, and he did so in words to this purpose:—"Khan, here is an English gentleman who wishes to go and see Khelaat and the Toorkomans, to take account of the *cot,huls*, and passes, and the roads, where guns can go, and by which an army may come, that the English may come and take the country:—what say you?" It would be hard to say whether the Khan or I were most taken aback by this strange explosion, which was followed up by a great deal more in the same strain, accusing the English government

of having assisted the ex-King of Caubul not only to recover his throne, but to invade Persia, and possess himself of part of her acknowledged dominions; and all given in a tone which, although intended to appear like jest, had something too bitter and sarcastic in it not to be wondrous like earnest.

At first I replied in a light and jocular strain, such as it seemed to be the minister's wish to assume; but as his jests grew keener I changed my tone, and told him, that if such were his real sentiments, — if he did, in truth, believe me to be a spy, — I should not, and could not, persist in any desire to see the countries I had purposed visiting, entirely from curiosity, but would return as I had come. "Oh no, no," said he; "all I have said was in jest, — all for the sake of conversation (*sohbutee*) — go wherever you like, *Bismillah!* and welcome. But ask the Khan there whether you can do so safely. My own opinion is, that this affair of Shah Shujâh, who, they say, has taken Kandahâr, will so much alarm the Toorkomans, that not a Frank of any nation can venture in among them."

The Khan, thus schooled, echoed, as a matter of course, the minister's words, adding that the Toorkomans had now left the Attock, and retired to the banks of the Thejend, to Merve, and other distant points, in consequence of the Kuzzilbash chappows, or inroads upon them; so that, though still exposed to their attacks, I should find none of their encampments to receive me, in the course I purposed taking. All this was unpleasant and depressing enough, and the conversation was put a stop to by the entrance of two or three persons, among whom

was one Meerza Yussuff, the nazir, or steward, of the late Prince Royal, who had just come in from the border districts, with a brother of the rebellious chieftain, Abbas Koolee Khan, of Deregez. This young man, who now entered with the nazir, came to try and accommodate matters on the part of that chief—it seems a question whether he will be permitted to return. The army ordered against that place, and which B—— was going to join when I saw him at Kallah Seyedhâ, has now entered the *Joolgeh*, or valley of Deregez, and commenced operations, it appears, both against the Khan and against the Toorkomans, one party of whom, by a letter which I received from him, he has cut up, killing seven and taking twenty-two, with some horses, prisoners; the heads have come in here as proofs of the fact.

"All these things are against me," but I do not so much mind the false words of the minister, or the forced testimony of the Khan, as I do those of my sincere friend, Meerza Reza, and of the blunt and honest Ismael Beg, my former host, neither of whom, so far as I can discover, can have any motive to deceive me. The latter, who lives quite retired and unconnected with any party, said to me the other evening, with great earnestness, "I was your friend of old, and am so still, believe me. I cannot bear to see you expose your head to certain destruction. I have warned you because I love you, because you have not forgotten an old and feeble man, now that he has fallen into decay. We have eaten bread and salt together; do not let me have the pain of hearing that your blood has been shed. Do not

go among these Toorkomans; they have neither faith nor honesty; they have neither chief nor government to answer for them; they will cut a throat for four *pool-e-siahs* (farthings), and if they take it into their heads that you are a spy, they will show you no mercy."

I fear I may have to abandon this part of my plan; and yet there are not wanting instances of fidelity even in Toorkomans. I was told of one where a Toorkoman bargained with a Persian merchant to carry him to Kyvah and back, for a specified sum. This being paid in advance, the Toorkoman took his charge to Kyvah, where leaving him at his lodgings, he went out, got drunk, and was beaten by the Oozbecks. The merchant hearing the row, and imagining his conductor to be in bad odour with the town's people, took fright, and hid himself in the house of some one with whom he had become acquainted, and with whom he subsequently went to Ourgenje, where his business lay. One day, while sitting in his caravanserai with his friend, who should burst in but his Toorkoman guide, who, on recognizing him, flew at and kissed him, bursting into tears of joy. On being asked what was the matter, he explained, that after his debauch, on coming to himself, he became bewildered with apprehension for his charge, and looked far and near for him in vain. He had pledged himself for his safety; they had eaten and drunk together, and lived long on the best of terms; and the thought of his having, perhaps, been taken and sold as a slave distracted him. He had heard, by chance, of a Persian merchant having gone to Our-

genje, on which he lost no time in repairing thither, and he blessed his God he had found him. This story was told the friend from whom I had it by the merchant himself to whom it happened, and who told it as a proof that Toorkomans do sometimes keep the oath of "bread and salt."

I fear, too, I should have great trouble with my servants were I to attempt a route so hazardous as this. They are a bad set; I have discovered several pieces of villany, common enough here, and not, perhaps, confined to Persian servants, and have been forced to dismiss my muleteer. The rogues cannot even agree amongst themselves; and though their disputes afford me the means of detecting their rascality, this does not improve my condition much, as it would be very difficult for a stranger to change for the better in so remote a part of the country. My lame horse has, however, arrived safely from Subzawar, and that is a satisfaction, as, from the difficulty of procuring money, I should have found it no easy matter to replace him.

LETTER IX.

Audience of leave.— A piece of news. — Jealousy of the Vizier. — Route by Kelaat Naderee abandoned. — Parting with old friends. — First march. — Grasshoppers. — Radcan. — Poverty. — Moochooloon. — A strong but necessary measure. — Kallah Eussuff Khan. — Thaveree. — Change in Khorasan. — Choice of roads. — Descent to Deregez Valley. — Arrival at the Persian camp.

17th June.

After a most teasing and sickening succession of fruitless negotiations for money, with which I should be sorry to worry you, after innumerable disappointments and vexations, I have at length, I believe, succeeded in wringing from the *Hadjee*, on whom my bill was given, the sum of fifty tomauns, that is, about 25*l.* sterling. This will do for necessaries, and I am not in a temper to be nice. Anything that sets me at liberty will be welcome. I have still a sort of shuddering recollection of the delays and persecutions I endured here of yore.

I was just going to the Hadjee about these same tomauns, when a furosh came to tell me that the Prince was waiting to see me, and I was of course obliged to attend the royal mandate. The audience was equally long as the former, but not so tedious or stiff, for I wore my Persian dress, and was altogether more at ease. In the course of conversation, when my departure was spoken of, the Prince himself suggested my going by the way of Kelaat-

Naderee and Deregez, and proposed my accompanying Yelantoosh Khan, who, it seems, is to return to his stronghold with his robes of honour in a few days. I thanked his Royal Highness for this permission, and observed that I was glad to find him too enlightened to entertain the same opinion of me as his minister, who had insisted on it that I was a spy, instead of a simple traveller. That in my former travels I had taken some pains to make myself acquainted with the country, for geographical purposes, and that then, perhaps, the ignorant might have had some pretext for believing me to be a spy; but that now I had not even a single instrument wherewith to take an observation, so that it was utterly absurd to make such a charge against me. He laughed at hearing of the conversation I had had with the minister, and said it was all nonsense; a mistake (*ghullut mekunid*); but that if I had such views I was perfectly welcome to take the altitude and shape of every hill and valley, and views of every place: we might send as many engineers as we liked for the purpose. One piece of news he told me that interested me much; it was the arrival of Sir Henry Bethune Lindsey at Tabreez, and you may suppose my speculations on such an occurrence.

When I took leave of the Prince I found the minister with a crowd of hangers on, Khans, Begs, Meerzas, and Gholaums, at the Durkhaneh. I had seen him on entering, long enough for him to tell me half a dozen lies about his exertions to get me money; he swore he had sent me fifty tomauns of *his own*, pretended extreme astonishment when

I told him that I had not received them, and held forth to some of the bystanders in a strain that must have led them to believe he had been labouring at no allowance in my service. On meeting him thus again, I told him what the Prince had said, and the encouragement I had received from him to go by Kelaat and Deregez. "To Kelaat!" repeated he; "to Kelaat! impossible—it is not prudent; I do not think it advisable at all. *Sulah neest—Sulah neest;* it will never do for you to go there;" and he reiterated his objections with great emphasis and considerable agitation. "Why, Khan," replied I, "it is the Prince's own proposition; I never even hinted at it." "The Prince!" repeated he, rather contemptuously; "what does the Prince know about the matter? But go—you may go; I forbid it not; but remember, it is *against my advice* —quite against my advice; I will be answerable for nothing." "Why," said Meerza Baukher, the officer who had presented me, "it is all true; I heard the Prince myself say the words, and so did Meerza Reza, who was by;" but the minister kept to his text, and, looking as black as night, still persisted in declaring that he was utterly averse to my going to Kelaat. "But there is Yelantoosh Khan himself," said he at last, pointing out the Khan among the crowd—"hear what he will say: as for me, I will have nothing to do in the matter; I wash my hands of it."

Apologizing to Yelantoosh Khan for not before observing him, I adverted to what the minister had said, and declared, that if he approved of my accompanying him, through his favour and that of

the Shahzadeh, I should fear nothing. Now I had sent the Meerza on the previous evening to the Khan, having made a vain attempt to get access to him myself, in order to discover his true sentiments on the subject; and if a grain of truth is in the man, my suspicions of his having been influenced by the minister's language when I met him at the house of the latter, were perfectly well founded, for he gave me through the Meerza a hearty invitation to come with him to Kelaat. Thus when appealed to by the minister now, and after such a prologue, it was no wonder that the poor Khan should stammer and be confused. He mumbled some unintelligible words, and the matter dropped for the time. But this puts the finishing blow to my projected visit both to Kelaat-Naderee and the Attock. It is obvious that, from some cause or other, it is not the minister's wish that I should proceed by that route, and such being the case on the part of the highest acting authority in the province, (for that of the young Prince is merely nominal,) it would be little short of madness for me to defy him by persistence, and assuredly most culpable to act in direct contravention of his declared opinion. Should the minister, for instance, resolve to prevent me from reaching my destination, how easy in so disturbed a province to give a hint to the Khan himself, or to any other chief, that a little imprisonment in a secluded place would do *me* no harm, while my ransom might do *him* good. And were I to be so entrapped, what would be the minister's reply to any application in my behalf? "Why, I told the Saheb openly and repeatedly, that I disapproved of the step he was taking,

and could not be responsible for its consequences.—Yelantoosh Khan is well known as a robber and a plunderer, yet with him he would go: what had he to expect?—I warned him, and I am blameless." Nay, might not the very plunder of my property, and the ransom to be expected in case of capture, tempt the minister himself, a mere upstart, to go halves with the Khan in the booty? So much for the minister. Then might not Yelantoosh Khan himself betray me, which, possessed as he is of an impregnable stronghold, having all its resources within itself, he could do without hazard of consequences? Might he not take it into his head, in spite of appearances, that I was encouraged by the Vizier and the Prince to go and examine Kelaat, and bring back intelligence of its weak points for evil purposes to him? In case of such a suspicion, no ransom, however great, would probably suffice to set me free.

What cause could have inspired the minister with a jealousy towards the English, so unusual in his countrymen, I cannot imagine. He was obviously discomposed by the success of Shujah-ool-Moolk, which he attributes, however erroneously, to English assistance; and possibly he might be stupid enough to suspect me of desiring to intrigue with the border chiefs. But all this seems scarcely sufficient to account for the equivocal nature of his conduct towards me. It was hinted to me afterwards that a bribe might have smoothed all difficulties, and that the affection which he evinced at an early period towards a rifle and pair of pistols of mine had not been displayed without a motive. Be that as it may, there were so many concurring causes to induce me to

forego the route I had proposed, and not to risk what was important for that which was less essential, that very reluctantly I did for the second time, and for ever, no doubt, abandon the hope of examining the famous fortress of Kelaat, and rest satisfied with seeing Deregez, and such parts of the Attock as might be safely traversed.

This course agreed with the advice of my old friends here, especially of old Caleb Allee Mervee, who has been brought to the brink of the grave by illness since I have been here. Yet his heart was as warm and kind as ever; he came out to bid me farewell, and said God had sent me here just to see him before he dies,—and I felt that the blessing he gave me as he took my hand, no doubt for the last time, had a virtue in it. From my old host, Ismael Beg, I received a like and a most sincere benediction; but my parting with Meerza Reza was more painful still. Whatever his faults to others, he had always been a fast friend to me, and the attachment which had been felt for me by his worthiest son, whom he still bitterly laments, had given something almost paternal to his feelings. I do believe that the embrace which, after a little interchange of trifling remembrances, he gave me on saying the *Khodah Hafiz*, and the tear which started as he said, "that his eyes would never be enlightened by seeing me more," were both warm and sincere. It is indeed true, in all human likelihood, that I never shall see these men again, but as little shall I ever forget their kindness to the stranger of a distant land: it is one of these sweet green spots in the weary way of life which it warms the heart to think of.

At length "all was accomplished:" I had received my money from the Hadjee, minus a handsome deduction for exchange and bonus,—I had shaken hands with the worthy Moollah Mehdee, the Jew Ketkhodah, who had been most unwearyingly and disinterestedly attentive, and with Meerza Geraummee Khan, whose conversation had cheered me in many an hour that would else have passed heavily enough away: my letters of introduction from the Prince were received; I had neither hopes nor fears to detain me longer, so I ordered my servants, much to their surprise, to load, late though it was, resolved to clear the city at all events this night, and convince them that I was in earnest. No one came to say "God speed us," except the poor old Hadjee *Seraidar*, who kept the house we lived in, and had been our most active servant: I had given him but a ducat, but his gratitude was such, that he would have followed us to the Khabooshan gate, by which we quitted the city, with blessings, had I permitted. It was near four in the afternoon of the 18th (this day) when we cleared them and quitted Mushed, as I verily believe, and fervently hope, for the last time, and took the same road which twelve years ago conducted me in like manner towards home. It seems not to be my fate to quit Mushed with regret, and certainly I was not ill pleased to leave it now.

A first march in Persia is never a long one; but the start serves to get your people together and complete those arrangements in the disposition of your baggage which are seldom perfect till you get

free of the town. We only went about ten miles to a little *chummun*, or meadow, beyond the village of Khooshmeitee, where our horses could graze, and ourselves rest for the few hours that shall intervene, before resuming our march; it is a true bivouac, our horses are feeding around us, our goods are beside us; the sky is above and a numud under me, and a dish of tea with a morsel of bread for my supper; but the warmth of the weather makes it delightful—darkness however closes in, so good night.

20th June.—We mounted yesterday morning at half past two, that is, not more than half an hour before the first glimmer of dawn; and, until that appeared, had the advantage of a brilliant moon. Twenty miles onward we took breakfast at another green spot where the horses could feed as well as we. We were now, in fact, in a country celebrated for its fine pasture, in the chummun or meadow, where the famous horses of Mammush Khan Zafferanloo were bred; but we had still a long way to ride before reaching Radcân, our intended *Munzil;* and the heat having been intense all day, and the sun getting low as we reached a remarkably fine spot of grass, near some *Kara-châders,* or black Eeliaut tents, we resolved to bivouac once more, and came to, about five P.M, after a march of forty-two miles. Milk and firing were procured from the tents, together with some bread for the servants; and a good pillaw, followed by that ever-welcome cordial, a dish of tea for myself, sent us all comfortably to sleep under our coverlids; for the air of the mea-

dow was too damp and cold to admit of our sleeping totally uncovered; in fact, our clothes were found in the morning to be soaked with dew.

The only thing remarkable in this day's march, was the multitude of grasshoppers that abounded everywhere—they were like the sand of the desert, numerous as locusts; yet locusts they were not, although the peasants declared that they did considerable injury to the crop. The horses at every step knocked up thousands of all sizes and hues, and some which, when at rest, looked like pieces of brown stick, when roused, expanded wings of the loveliest colours, particularly a beautiful pink. The whole plain was alive with them, and with butterflies and dragonflies of the most gorgeous tints; and what with them and the numerous flowers that were springing among the corn and the herbage, there was enough to amuse the eye, though the other senses might be oppressed with heat.

This morning, the 20th, we were on foot a little after four, and reached Radcân, all dying of hunger. It is a village, or rather a small fortified town, of considerable antiquity, and the seat of one of the Koordish chiefs in this quarter. But it bore strong marks of the ruin which has overtaken the whole of this great province within the last three years, from the combined scourges of war and scarcity. Its houses were almost all empty; part of its men had accompanied their chief, Ibrahim Khan, to the siege of Deregez, before which the Persian army has taken up its position; the rest, terrified at the very sight of a party of horsemen, crept away into hiding

holes, so that we could scarcely find a person to anwer an inquiry.

Our demands were, bread, and *mās*, (sour milk,) barley, and a guide. Of these necessaries, none were to be had except the last; and he was produced only with the greatest difficulty, and a combination of threats and promises: but neither love nor money would purchase bread or barley. For many days, the villagers assured us that they had existed by roasting the half-ripe barley or wheat, and then boiling it up with a little grass of some sort or other from the fields. That the harvest had not been more than two days begun, and every grain threshed out was devoured as soon as obtained. That all their bullocks, yaboos, and even their asses, had been seized upon for the use of the army, and, in short, that they were in every way a wretched and depressed set of people. They assured us, however, that there was a fine village only two fursucks further on, where bread and barley would be easily obtained, as the harvest was further advanced than with them; and accordingly, finding we could screw nothing but a guide out of the Radcânees, we pressed forward to Soohoon, where, after a world of negotiation, we obtained a promise of bread and corn; but the former was to be baked, and so we had to wait for it. After all, only one-half of the quantity we required could be obtained.

Our stage for the night was Moochooloon, a pleasantly situated village, where we arrived early in the evening. Here also they made all manner of asseverations and vows of poverty and destitution. In

spite of fair words and proffers of fairer coin, even in advance, for all we might require, we could force nothing from them except an obstinate and dogged refusal. They declared they lived themselves on grass, or half-ripe barley, and had nothing to give us, so at last I was forced to have recourse to harsher means. There is here a fine spring, or rather a *cannaut*, which comes to the surface close by the gate of the village, at the very door of our lodging. This I perceived to be full of fish, of which I was resolved to have a dish: and though, alas! my poor fishing rod was gone, I made a shift to rig up a line and hook, with which I was pulling the creatures out as fast as I threw in, when one of my servants came to tell me that unless I would permit force to be used, neither horses nor people would have anything to eat. The people, they said, unaccustomed to gentleness, attributed the tone I had assumed to irresolution, and could not even comprehend the meaning of so novel a sort of treatment.

I had myself begun to suspect that I was talking a language which the people did not understand, and that my fine ideas of justice and generosity were above their comprehension, — to discover, in short, that when at Rome one must do as the Romans do: so quitting my sport I returned to my lodging, girded on my sword, stuck a pistol in my belt, and accompanied by two armed servants entered the village. There I found the people clustering together in a state of uncertainty between fear and desire of resistance; but leaving them no time to deliberate, I stalked up to the first respectable-looking man I saw, seized him by the collar, and conducting him out-

side the gate, gave him in charge to another of my servants. I then returned, and finding my two servants struggling with some others, one of whom, a serbauz or toffunchee, had made himself particularly conspicuous, I seized him, and having with some difficulty made him likewise a prisoner, I turned to the rest and said, "I spoke to you as men, kindly, and promised you full price for all I might require. I have in my pocket papers which would warrant my seizing such supplies as I need without paying you a farthing, but it was my wish to get them by fair means, and pay you their fair value. I now find you to be beasts, and tell you that if you do not furnish me immediately with all I want, I will take them by force, and not a farthing shall you receive."

You should have seen the change of tone which this little show of energy produced. At once, as if by magic, every angry look and word ceased. "What was the meaning of my displeasure?" asked one of them in a voice of most insinuating mildness, "when, *wullah billah*, they only required to know my desire in order to comply with it, and were in all respects my most humble slaves. Everything I wanted should be procured, if they dug in the very earth for it: only let my anger be appeased, and let the people I had taken hold of be set at liberty, and all should be right." I told them that when all *was* right, and not till then, should their friends be set at liberty. So leaving the fellows, who had received some pretty sharp kicks and thumps in the fray, under a guard with a drawn sword, I quietly returned to my fishing.

I had no more trouble. Bread, corn, and a lamb, with grass for the horses, and all the needful et ceteras for man and beast, were immediately produced; and then, and not till then, did I release my captives. A plentiful dish of fish was added to the fare, and the night passed off well for all parties; for I took care to pay every man with my own hand, that the villagers might have no just cause of complaint against us.

I forgot to mention that at Radkân there is a tower of the Arab architecture and æra, resembling the *Goombuz-e-kaoos* in Jorjaum, and several mounds indicating the site of an ancient city. I picked up at our bivouac of the preceding night a piece of stone rudely carved in the Persepolitan fashion.

21st June.—Trusting to the servants, we were two hours behind our time of starting; that is, we were in the saddle by four in the morning. Our route yesterday had been along the skirts of the right-hand hills, which are spotted with trees of the *arbor vitæ*. But after pursuing the same course for ten miles to the ruins of a miserable little village, where we breakfasted, but which could supply us with nothing but a little fuel, we turned to our right, and, plunging among the low hills that skirt the mountains, threaded some pretty green valleys; until after a ride of about twenty-eight miles we reached a fortress, or fortified village, known by the name of Kallah Eussuf Khan. Here we made the same application as at other places, for bread, barley, and a guide. Now there was resident at this place a person of some respectability, who could not deny himself; but he

waved compliance with my demands, sending by my messenger a guide, and two loaves or cakes of bread, with an assurance that it was all he had for himself in the place; and that as for barley, not a *maun* of it had as yet been got in.

This story, in a place of from two to three hundred houses, was so utterly improbable that I resolved upon questioning the governor myself. I found with him a person who perfectly recollected me in former times at Khabooshan; and though this circumstance was insufficient to procure me bread or corn, it had the effect of producing a better guide, and a more decided order than had before been given for our reception at the village of Thaveree, some eight or ten miles further on. We found the country in considerable alarm from the report of a chuppowing party of a thousand Toorkomans, said to have passed through the Deregez valley on their way to plunder the environs of Khabooshan. Now one of the best and most easy of their routes was that very one by which we were about to proceed; for the valley of Kallah Eussuf Khan leads into that of Khabooshan, which place was actually within sight, so that it became a little awkward to move forward. On we went, however, through much fine cultivation of wheat and barley, and up the course of a fine stream, the Yeich, until we reached a curious and narrow defile, bounded by bare limestone rocks, and of a good many miles in length. At a point in this ravine where the mountains seem utterly to close up further progress, the stream has broken through them by a gorge, which admitted us into one of the prettiest and greenest little valleys possible, with two

or three picturesque and fortified villages, surrounded by a noble sheet of wheat and barley, still green, but of the finest possible growth. One of these villages was Thaveree, our quarters for the night.

And now again commenced the customary wrangle for provisions. Nothing proves more strikingly the lamentable alteration in the state of the country than this extreme reluctance to supply travellers with necessaries. When I was formerly in Khorasan, I never came to a village, where, if there was no regular *Mehman-khaneh*, the *Ket-khodah* or *Reish-seffeed* himself did not offer, or find me a lodging, and where I was not sure of corn for my horses, and a good cake of wheaten bread for myself, if not a well-buttered pillaw. But now, since the late wars and the exactions of the military, so terrified are the people at the sight of strangers, that the first thing they think of is to make their escape from extortion. Watchmen are planted on the towers or heights around to give notice of any horseman's approach, and the alarm they give is the signal for the Ket-khodah to make himself scarce. Off he goes with most of the respectable villagers; and on inquiry being made for him by the stranger, the reply is that he has gone to some distant place, and that all the people are in the mountains with their sheep and cattle. All that can be concealed is put in hiding-places; and if you chance to see some proper fellows lounging about, you are told that they are only strangers or travellers. In short, the trick is that you shall find no one of whom to demand what you may require. You tell those you see that they shall receive payment for what is wanted: it

is in vain; they have been cheated in this way before, and swear stoutly that there is nothing to be had. If you ask what they eat themselves, they tell you *grass*, or *herbs*. This you know to be a lie, so you produce money, and offer to pay beforehand for all you take. Still it is in vain; the serbauz and their officers have had recourse to the same expedient to lure them into producing their stores, and then have taken back the money by force; so they still persist in affirming that they have nothing. In fact, the oppression they have suffered seems quite to have confounded their intellects, so that they cannot reason, and stand like over-driven asses in stupid dogged obstinacy to bear the blows that are rained on them, for the matter generally ends as it did with me yesterday. The traveller must have necessaries, so he catches and threshes the first man he can lay hold of. Thus, from their countrymen, they suffer both the licking and the loss; the first of which, and probably part of the second, they might have avoided by more prudent conduct. From me, and I hope from Europeans in general, they receive the price of what is taken; but they lose the donation which civility would have obtained, and gain the blows instead.

In the present case, I am happy to say, matters were not pushed to such extremities. The Ketkhodah, it is true, had absconded; but our guide, whom we paid liberally, conveyed to the rest the orders of their superior, and money and fair words, coupled with a few implied threats of consequences in case of recusancy, produced what we required. We slept on the roof of a house, for in the very

heart of chuppows and plunder it is unsafe to pass the night in bivouac, and in the morning found our coverings soaked with the heavy dew. Our fare to-day also has been assisted by my piscatory skill; again I got up my mutilated apparatus, and, with a branch of a tree for a rod, caught some fish which would have made some of our sporting friends stare: they are, I think, a species of barbel.

Hitherto, the country from Mushed had been pretty level and the roads good, but we had now plunged into and had to cross a range of lofty mountains, which promised harder work. Of three roads in our option, one led by the pass of Alla-hu-Akber, a tremendous affair, and in which report said there was a chance of meeting fifteen hundred Toorkomans, coming to plunder Khabooshan, so we would have none of it; the second was very far round about; so we resolved to take the third, leading by the pass of Tooinge, which, though very rough, was a nearer way, and more likely to be clear of evil company.

We were in the saddle by five in the morning, and soon entered a rocky pass which led to the top of the first ridge. Descending by a deep and tortuous ravine, we reached another and very beautiful valley, with a village perched on a rocky eminence, and surrounded by orchards of apricot and walnut-trees, and overlooking a splendid field of wheat; but all was deserted: tyranny and extortion had driven the inhabitants away to take shelter with the rebellious Khan of Deregez. The encouragement given to such deserters is one of the causes of complaint against that chief. The northern boundary of this

valley was a mountain, which rose before us in rather alarming majesty; for up it we knew we must go, though *how* was a question, as neither cleft nor ravine appeared on its perpendicular face. Our surprise was not lessened at sight of our path, which led in the most uncompromising zig-zag right up the precipice. It was a toilsome business, and the more so, as, from a desire to save our horses' feet, we walked upon our own nearly all the way to the top. Once there, however, the severest of our labours were at an end, for after traversing the uneven summit of the mountain, and reaching the top of the descent, we found ourselves overlooking the valley of Deregez, which lay below us, and divided from the Attock by only one low ridge of hills—that Attock I had longed so much to see, and which now was spread almost at my feet like a dark sea, fading into distance till the horizon blended with the sky.

We could not afford to gaze long on this interesting scene, however, for a tremendous descent lay before us, and our resting place was far away; so, without more ado, we plunged down the northern face of the mountain, and after half-slipping, half-tumbling, for some miles over black rocks and green slopes, found ourselves in a ravine, the dry bed of some former torrent, for the agency of water was evident in the frequent rifting of the solid rock. Yet the remarkable disturbance which these mountains exhibit, has, probably, not been produced by water alone; for the contortions of the strata would puzzle any geologist alive. The whole range is composed mainly of secondary limestone, which may have been confused by the upward projection of the

primitive rocks that here and there make their appearance at the summits. I have heard of no volcanic appearances in this quarter.

Through this narrow gulley, in which there was not a drop of water, we wound for eight miles; and it was only on issuing from it, by climbing its left bank, that we perceived, still about fifteen miles distant, the Persian camp, to which I had resolved, in the first place, to wend my way, as there I should be sure of learning the best course of proceeding. The day was already far spent, and a weary extent of waving downs lay between us and our journey's end. Yet even weariness could not render me indifferent to the features of the country we had reached, and which, for Persia, were certainly fine.

It was a noble valley, perhaps fifty or sixty miles long, divided longitudinally by several ridges of rocks, and studded everywhere with fine large fortified villages surrounded with gardens. I counted twenty of them at once in view, and there were others hidden by the rocks and in the ravines. The sheets of cultivation, all ripe and crying out for the sickle, were quite astonishing, and we looked, as we passed, for the reapers, but none were to be seen; and in the villages through which we passed for inhabitants, but only a few stragglers were there; all, they said, had left their homes for the shelter of Mahomedabad (the capital), where the defence was to be made; indeed, fear of the army and its lawless excesses would of itself have driven them there. The camp had that morning moved its ground to a fresh village; and when, about seven o'clock at night, I reached its outskirts, I saw the horsemen

and serbauz stationing their horses and yaboos in the green crop, and cutting that which was ripe for their own use and that of the horses in camp. All was bustle; but without pausing I made my way through it to the tent of B——, who received me with open arms.

On inquiry, I learned that all differences with Abbas Koolee Khan were in a fair way of being settled amicably, and that my own business might also be arranged so as to insure the provision of a satisfactory method of crossing the Attock, among the Toorkomans themselves, in perfect safety. But to accomplish this would require the delay of a day or two, and I was not sorry to have that time to examine the economy of a Persian camp, and collect what information was there to be gathered respecting the adjacent countries. Next day, however, brought news that threatened not only a longer detention in camp, but promised the sight of a little Khorasanee fighting. The Khan delayed fulfilment of his part of the convention, and the return of the deputies sent to treat was looked for as the signal for an advance upon Mahomedabad, a movement which certainly would not be made unopposed by the Khan.

LETTER X.

Persian camp-practice, and mode of obtaining supplies. — Checks upon plundering. —Villages chuppowed. — Toorkoman allies.— Negotiations. — Delays. — B——'s illness. — Decision of character. —Way to stop a mutiny. —Camp changes its ground.— Insects. — Spiders.

This morning I paid my respects to Noor Mahomed Khan, a brother of the Ausef-u-dowlut, who is the official general of this army, though the military arrangements are principally conducted by my friend B——. Here we picked up a good deal respecting the state of the country and the camp. That of the latter was, in truth, pretty apparent. There being no commissariat—no regular supplies of food and necessaries provided for the men, they were of necessity permitted to range about at will in search of what they could find; and you constantly saw parties of from five to a dozen coolly mounting their horses, and taking their spears in most business-like style, fare forth, as the old borderers were wont to do, in search of what they might pick up. In due time, if on the watch, you might observe the same parties returning home with some unfortunate cow, or a parcel of sheep across their saddles; or, at worst, a mountain of wheat or barley, shorn with their swords, for the use of themselves and their cattle.

Indeed I found myself forced to adopt similar

measures, and to follow camp fashions as well as other fashions, in order to support my own people. One of them came this day to tell me they could get no fuel; I told him to cut some branches from the next trees for that purpose.—"Oh! no," said B——, "that will never do — they won't burn; let him go to the nearest house in the village and pull it to pieces; that will supply them with as much as they want." "Be Chushm!" said my fellow, and off he set. In less than an hour back he came with a yaboo load of wood—doors, windows, &c. — the spoil of some unhappy domicile. Numbers of the husbandmen, who had stolen from their retreats to view the wreck of their property, took courage from despair, and came to B—— with pitiful complaints. "What can I do, men?" would he reply; "point me out the thieves, if you can?" "How can we do that among so many?" "Well, then, how am I to help you? And even if they were found out and punished, would that restore to life your cow or sheep, or build up your house again?" A party of such complainants beset him this morning as we were out riding, beseeching him to save their corn from a troop of serbauz, who were then busy cutting it. "Go, go," replied he; "I will send from camp when I reach it." When we returned I put him in mind of his promise. "Why, who should I send?" replied he: "if I send a party of horse, or more serbauz, it will be but adding to the thieves; and if I send a gholaum, or one of the sirdar's (general's) furoshes, he will first squeeze from the people the few *koroonees* (money) they may have—then eat and drink his fill

at their expense; and by the time these preliminaries are settled the whole mischief will have been done; and, after all, our fellows must eat: we did not come here to starve."

It was sad, however, to see the waste and wanton mischief often committed in procuring the requisite food. One night the whole plain, south of the camp, appeared in a blaze; it was discovered that a fine sheet of wheat and barley had been wantonly set on fire by some serbauz. "This will never do," said B——," we shall have the camp burned next;" and he instantly addressed himself to discovering the culprits. Having learned their regiment, he went at once to the general's tent. "We must stop this work," said he; "we must cut off a few ears—that will do the business." Whether the ears were cropped or not, I know not, but I saw no more fires.

These predatory parties, however, did meet with occasional checks of another sort, and several individuals became the victims of their own cupidity, and of the rage of the inhabitants. The first night I was in camp two serbauz went out to cut wheat; the field was scarcely beyond the lines. One of them returned, but the other did not; and the next morning his headless trunk, found upon the spot, explained the reason of his absence, as well as of a slight struggle which his companion *then* remembered to have heard, but thought nothing of at the time. The head had been sent to Abbas Koolee Khan. Two days afterwards, four Deregezees seized a man, who, no doubt, had been marauding, and, dragging him apart, proceeded to slay him. But they fell

out about the honour of shedding the first blood; and the poor fellow, finding himself disregarded for a moment, and not conceiving himself bound to await the arrangement of their dispute, started up, and made for the camp. Being hard pressed, however, he threw himself into the well of a canaut which lay in his way, and his pursuers believing him killed, or, at all events, out of their reach, made off. Fortunately, he received little injury in his fall, and finding himself in the underground canal, he pursued it to its mouth, and then emerging, walked quietly back to camp. The truth of this tale rests on the man's own word. I do not answer for it, but it is believed in camp.

Nor are other stirring incidents wanting to enliven the present period of inaction. Abbas Koolee Khan, our opponent, had sent for assistance against the Persian army to the Toorkomans of the Attock. Of these, fifteen hundred made their appearance, and sending their *Reish Suffeeds* (elders) to the Khan, proposed to make a diversion in his favour by *chappowing* Chinnaran, or Boojnoord, or even Mushed itself, provided he would give them ten heads of the best families in Mahomedabad, as hostages that no molestation should be offered them during their retreat with the booty. It appears that the Khan could not, or at least did not, agree to this proposal; and the Toorkomans, determined not to return empty-handed, sent one party to plunder a village of the Khan's within three miles of our camp, and another to perform the same office in the neighbourhood of Khabooshan. The first party did their work so cleverly, that not a word was heard

of it till all was over, when seven persons were found to have been killed, and twenty carried off prisoners. A similar fate befel another village, some two or three miles more distant: the dead alone remained to tell the tale.

Next day, however, matters assumed a more peaceful aspect. Wheat, barley, and a number of sheep were sent into camp, so that we had no lack of food; but the principal terms of the proposed convention remained still uncomplied with. It would weary you were I even to touch on the *pros* and *cons*, the quibbles and quirks, and the whole detail of intrigue, which marked each step of the negotiation; yet, if well done, it would afford a rich specimen of the pettifogging character of Persian diplomacy. Each day brought its fresh difficulty and fresh delay, until my friend B——, who is not the most patient of mortals, swore he would quicken their apprehensions by marching straight to the capital; a measure which was only averted by the arrival in camp of a new mediator—no other than my friend, Yelantoosh Khan, who came from Kelaat, not I fancy to facilitate, but rather to embroil matters. A delay of three days more was thus, much to my discomfiture, produced. But what can I do? The country is in no state for travelling, and, non-combatant though I may be, I should run the same risks as others, were I to leave camp at present; on the other hand, were I to go to Mahomedabad, Abbas Koolee Khan might very possibly take a fancy to detain me there as a means of extorting better terms, or under the belief that my friends would use money or influence largely for my liberation.

The evil might only, perhaps, amount to delay; but to me, delay is serious, and such a *faux pas* might increase it indefinitely.

Another cause of anxiety, perhaps of delay, has arisen. B——, my best friend for all purposes in camp, has fallen ill, and the pain he has been in for these last three days, has incapacitated him from attending either to business or to guests. I have been obliged to nurse him, and feel that it would be inhuman to leave him, in such circumstances, to the care of ignorant and possibly ill-disposed people, who, were he quite disabled, would little care what might become of him. Nor can I be insensible to the possible effect which any accident to him might have upon my own position; for as he is the soul of the expedition, such an event might produce a panic which would disorganize the army and turn the tables in favour of the enemy. But "*Khodah Buzoorgust!*" God is great!—as the Easterns say, and I confide in his goodness and mercy!

The truth is, that B—— is more feared than loved here—envied and hated by his rivals and fellow officers, and dreaded by the men for his severity. It is singular what an ascendency he has acquired over their minds, in spite of the questionable support which he receives from the higher powers. Just the day before I reached camp, a regiment mutinied for some reason or other, and rising upon their officers, were about to put them to death, when the hubbub reached the ears of B——. It was an emergency just calculated to call forth all the energies of his fearless mind;—seizing his sword, he threw himself among the mutineers, and laying about him,

cut down one, ran another through the body, and a third through the thigh, before they could well look round them to see what was the matter. It was touch and go—kill or cure; but the result was fortunate and decisive. Fear came upon them all,—the drums beat to arms, and the mutineers themselves, at B——'s word of command, formed a hollow square, in the centre of which he stood alone. The instruments of punishment were ordered forth, some of the ringleaders were flogged upon the spot, and the rest were pardoned on promise of good conduct. A whit less of promptitude and decision might have been fatal; but B—— is happily well gifted with these qualities, which in the service he is engaged in are, of all others, the most indispensable.

30th June.—Two days ago the army, having devoured all in its neighbourhood, struck its tents and marched to another village, which crumbled at its touch into ruin, like the rest. The horses were tethered in the green corn, the ripe crop was trodden down, the trees stripped of their unripe fruit and branches; and you might hear the crackling of the houses as they fell, pulled to pieces for the wood they afforded. I saw a whole rabble of serbauz and camp followers rush into a vineyard full of unripe fruit. It withered before them as if fire had passed over it, and the sour grapes were borne off in horse loads; my servants brought me a quantity, of which the juice squeezed out made excellent sherbet.

Next day reinforcements, to the extent of more than three thousand men, came to add to the force and brilliancy of the camp, now between seven and

eight thousand strong, and to assist in eating up the country. The Toorkomans have chuppowed two more villages of Deregez, but, it is said, have been repulsed in an attempt upon *Kooshkhaneh*, (the Hawke's Nest,) a village of Khabooshan; thus we are not likely to go to sleep for want of excitement, and in truth there is enough to amuse one even within the camp. I only wish I could describe it all without being tedious, but that could only be done by the pencil; for so much depends on costume and character, that to convey an idea of the scenes constantly passing before our eyes as we sit in the open tent, would be impossible.

Nor are the sounds that every now and then break upon the ear less curious and interesting. On the very first evening I started from my seat at hearing the drums and fifes, and a sort of regimental band playing English marches and Scotch tunes in the middle of the camp—think of my sensations on recognizing "Cease, rude Boreas," the Scotch trumpet tune, and several reels and quick steps played by Persian fifers in the middle of the valley of Deregez, within sight of the great Toorkoman Desert, and being awakened every morning by the reveillez of the cavalry bugles!

The next thing that attracted me was a prodigious clapping of hands and shouting, which commenced just about dark, and continued for many minutes with a measured cadence. This, I was told, was a charm uttered by the whole camp against the bite of venomous insects, and especially of an enormous spider, of whom more anon. All day the camp resounded with the grinding and beating of

corn, which thus, mostly thrashed out by hand and roasted, formed a large portion of the soldiers' food. But the most hideous and annoying noise of all arose from the asses, which swarmed in the camp—true four-footed asses, I mean, which, tied by threes and fours together in every quarter, kept up a most inconceivable braying. It came periodically, that is, every quarter of an hour some abominable brute set up his throat, and was instantly joined by his neighbours; this awakened the next group, and so it went on throughout the whole; and no sooner did the distant sound give promise of a truce, than up got some friend close by, fresh and clear as if he had not uttered one bray that day, and then was sounding his trumpet for dear life. I never suffered a more diabolical vocal persecution.

Then we had the insects, hideous and fearful of aspect—countless in multitudes, to contend with; flies of every sort and size, slaters of extraordinary plumpness, beetles as large as humming-birds, ants and spiders in myriads, with clouds of grasshoppers, assaulted us in every possible way. Attracted by the lights at night, they entered the open tents, jumping into our sherbet and pillaws at dinner, drowning themselves in our tea, and entering our very mouths as we opened them to drink it. They crawled all over us in thousands, and made their abode in our garments. But worst of all was that enormous spider to which I alluded just now, and which, in Persian, is called the *rootail*, or *shutoorzen*, (camel stinger,) and by the learned, I believe, the *phalangium*. Some of these are yellow, some black, and of an immense size—perhaps, in-

cluding legs, not less than five inches in spread, and, the latter particularly, hirsute and hideous of aspect. Now as the carpets of the tent are spread on the bare ground there is no manner of preventing the ingress and egress of these monsters, and we were frequently more surprised than pleased by the sudden approach of a formidable *rootcil* galloping in upon us, or perhaps over us. One morning I had just dressed myself, and was putting on my boots preparatory to riding out, when I became aware of a strange scratching *within* my wide Persian trousers. I gave a convulsive stamp or two with my foot, when down fell a thumping fellow who had unceremoniously crawled into that forbidden region. You know my abhorrence of the whole race of spiders, and can conceive the shudder with which I viewed the intruder, whom I valiantly severed in two with my sword, the only weapon within reach, as he was making off at speed. You shall see his picture, which was taken on the spot immediately after his execution. But I had not done with spiders for that day, for while seated at dinner I felt something like a crab scrambling up my neck; and, on putting up my hand, pulled down another of these amiable reptiles, which fell upon the cloth before me;—him I finished with my knife.

The most absurd affair with these creatures, however, occurred on the next evening, when B——, a Persian colonel, the Meerza, and I, were seated on the carpet at dinner. The Meerza happening to look round, caught sight of such a monster entering the tent, that up he started, incontinently, with a cry of horror; up shot the colonel in no less haste, and I was not slow in following. B——, unable from

illness to move, alone kept his ground; but all stood for a moment aghast, as the monster, like a mounted dragoon, charged right in amongst us, galloped over the cloth, scaled the mountain of pillaw which smoked in the centre, and then suspecting, from the bustle, perhaps, that his presence might be unwelcome, made for the opposite side, where he was lost in the darkness: for although every one grappled at something wherewith to slay him, and sundry blows were aimed at his person, he seemed to bear a charmed life; and as to treading such a giant under foot with our slipperless soles, we might as well have thought of crushing a huge lobster. The worst of the matter is, that the sting, or rather bite, of these huge insects, is said to be very dangerous; the Persians affirm that it sometimes is mortal, and they fear them exceedingly. It is obvious, however, that the animal seldom makes use of this dangerous power, as otherwise, considering their numbers, accidents would needs be very frequent indeed, which is far from being the case.

LETTER XI.

Account of the quarrel between Abbas Koolee Khan and the Persian Government. — Emigration. — The Khan's proposals. — Yelantoosh Khan, the envoy.—Reply. — A counter proposition. — Break up of camp — Army marches towards the passes. — We proceed to Mahomedabad. — An alarm. — Treacherous guide. — Persian soldiers — their intelligence and powers of endurance. — Hardships in Khorasan campaigns. — Anecdote of some Serbauz. — The pass. — Mahomedabad. — The Khan.— Intrigues. — The Attock. — A dinner party. — A present. — — Tricks of guides. —Ascent of the pass.— The Sirdar's camp.

Mahomedabad of Deregez. July 1st.

HERE I am, at last, in the "Tod's-hole,"—in the stronghold of the enemy—heaven send me safe out of it! The arrival of the fresh troops gave spirit to our proceedings and quickened the movements of the Deregezees. Yelantoosh Khan had come to camp with a proposal from his friend, which was agreed to by the Sirdar, provided *he* would stand security. But, by way of shortening my story, I may as well tell it you in order, and explain the cause of the expedition, which is characteristic enough of this curious country and people.

Abbas Koolee Khan, formerly called *Reza* Koolee, is the son of the late Begler Khan, hereditary chieftain of Deregez; one of a race of border chiefs nearly as celebrated here as were the Douglasses, the Percies, the Scots, the Kerrs, the Musgraves, &c. &c. of Scottish and of English border story.

Deregez itself is a small khânat, or district, situated on the very edge of the Attock, and close to the country of those formidable Toorkomans of whom you have so often heard. When Begler Khan died, he left as heir this, the son of his noblest wife; but the young Reza Koolee found it difficult to protect his rights from the encroachment of his brothers; and these family squabbles drove him from his paternal property, of which the revenue does not exceed 2,500*l.* a-year, to seek protection in Khyvah. After the fall of Reza Koolee Khan, of Khabooshan, who had taken great part in the affairs of Deregez, the late Prince Royal sent for the fugitive Reza Koolee, treated him with great kindness, restored his dominions to him, and suggested that as his name of *Reza* had been unfortunate, he should change it for that of Abbas, being that of his royal protector. This was a mark of high favour, and complied with, of course; but the change of name produced no change of character. Rash and thoughtless, the young chief, by various acts of folly, obtained the appellation of *Dellee-Khan*, or the mad Khan, by which he is still known, and in which he seems to take pride.

By one of the arrangements made with the Prince, the Khan was bound at all times to entertain and hold in readiness a certain contingent force of horse and foot, which, together with certain specified subsidies, limited in amount on account of the expense entailed on him by his exposed situation, and continual attacks from the Toorkomans, formed the whole assessment imposed on him. But it appears that since the death of his patron, the young man-

has neglected the performance of these engagements, and imagining himself a great chief, confident, too, in the strength of his country, he has been rash enough to refuse compliance with the demands of government: perhaps incited to do so by others, who fain would try its strength without exposing themselves. But there are other grounds of complaint. Since the reduction of the Koordish states in this quarter, governors, on the Prince's part, have been put in charge, who, probably not expecting a long reign, have sought by extortion to make the most of their time. The Ryots, accustomed to the patriarchal and comparatively milder sway of their own chiefs, got alarmed at this change, and many, in order to avoid its effects, fled into neighbouring districts — some went to Boojnoord, some to Subzawar, and many to Deregez. They speak of one thousand families from Khabooshan alone. These were all well received by the Khan, who located them in villages and gave them lands.

Now, in Persia, the seduction of peasantry from one district to another is held a deadly crime; for where a population is already half erratic in its propensities, were acts of oppression to be always followed by such emigrations, there would be no end to changes and loss of revenue in consequence; at least, so reason the Persian economists. All such attempts, therefore, are put down, where possible, by force, and bitter quarrels amongst neighbours are often the consequence. The runaways were demanded from Abbas Koolee Khan, who either could not collect them or would not—the latter was, probably, the truth. All Khorasan, a seething pot of

discontent, was looking on, and any symptom of weakness on the part of government would have been equivalent to a cession of the country. This was felt, and produced a vigorous effort. The army was set in motion, and B——, who was chosen for its practical commander on the occasion, by a sudden, and really a masterly manœuvre, turned the guarded passes, and entered the valley of Deregez by an unthought-of route, before the inhabitants dreamed that he could have reached the defiles, in which they hoped to annihilate his force: the rest you know. The Khan had agreed to give up the runaways, to pay his assessment, and furnish his contingent. He promised, moreover, to collect and give up the fugitives before the end of ten days, provided the Persian troops should immediately quit the *julgeh* (valley). This, however, as the army was living at free quarters on the enemy, by no means suited the politics of *its* commanders; and it was to arrange these matters that Yelantoosh Khan had come to camp. The proposals he brought were in substance much as above, and Yelantoosh Khan offered to pledge himself for their fulfilment. The reply to this proposal was simple. "All this is well, Khan, but who is to be *your* security? Will *you* agree to remain in camp for these ten days, until the whole runaways shall be given up?" This took the Khan all aback; he was evidently unprepared for a reply. But reduced to choose between appearing as art and part with his friend in a trick, and running the risk of remaining a prisoner till that friend should be able or willing to redeem the pledge demanded, he embraced the latter alternative and consented to

remain, trusting to some *ruse* or chance for extricating himself. This resolution was of some use to me, as the security possessed in the Khan's person would cover all risk I might be supposed to run in venturing into Deregez. I therefore took advantage of the truce, and resolved to join a party of horsemen who were bound for Mahomedabad.

Meantime the camp broke up, according to agreement, and marched to the foot of the hills, intending to cross them next day. But B——, who still had his doubts, resolved to occupy the pass with a thousand men and some guns, and not to move downwards until all should have been concluded, and I agreed with him that I should return to his camp, if possible, on the third day. It was a picturesque and stirring sight, this breaking up of a large camp in the morning; tents striking, baggage packing, troops forming on the ground, its advanced guard streaming away in a long line in one direction; parties hurrying in on all sides from reconnoitring or from plunder, while the main body and its baggage more leisurely left the ground, protected by the rear-guard. The plain was covered with groups of horsemen, spurring here and there, and as our own small party rode along, after separating from the army, we often had to detach a single person to examine some approaching body, and learn whether they were friends or foes.

There is within two miles of Mahomedabad the chief fortress and residence of the Khan, whither we were bound, a ridge of hills, or rather rocks, which rise to a height of two hundred and fifty to six hundred feet, and in the centre of which there is a

gap caused by the course of a stream. Through this gap, which is called the *Derbend* of Mahomedabad, the road passes; and as we were approaching it, we were alarmed by observing a cloud of dust arising, and next a large body of men issuing from a hollow very near it. It proved, however, to be only a Persian regiment, who were escorting the guns, and whose guide had misled them purposely from the right way, in the hope of creating some disturbance thus close to the approaches to the fortress. His attempt so far succeeded as to throw the Deregezees into violent commotion, for we saw the rocks and heights bristling with armed men; every hole showed two or three heads, and there were three or four men behind every hillock—there must have been from six to eight hundred people thus scattered about these rocks. The colonel commanding the regiment was exceedingly displeased with the rascally guide, and some horsemen of our party rode forward to quiet the apprehensions of the Deregezees; but they did not succeed, for the clamour increased every moment; a sort of warning shout rang from cliff to cliff, and I verily expected to see the matchlocks pointed at us, and hear the whiz of their balls. But the course of the line of march being altered, the alarm gradually subsided, and our party were permitted to approach unmolested.

The villany of the guide might have produced very serious results, for the soldiers were exasperated by the death of some of their comrades who had been killed while marauding, while the Deregezees were equally enraged by the damage done to their villages and crops. A single shot from either

party would, I am convinced, have set all in a blaze; and the row once begun, who can say where it would have ended? It might have happened, too, at an unlucky moment for the troops, for their false line of march having taken them close to a village as yet untouched, the gardens filled with fruit were a sight they could not resist. Nearly a third of their number broke from the ranks, and spread over orchards and vineyards, which they soon stripped of apricots, and even grapes, cucumbers, &c.; nor was it until a halt was made, and the trumpet sounded loud and long the recall, that the greater part returned to their colours. And here I cannot help paying a just tribute to these Persian soldiers, in spite of this little specimen of irregularity. I never saw more light-hearted, willing, active creatures, nor men who more cheerfully put up with, or better sustain, privations and hardships. During the greater part of the time I was in camp, the chief, if not the only food they had, was parched corn cut by themselves,—for the sheep and cattle of the neighbourhood were soon swept away either by them or by their owners,—but there were neither murmurs nor complaints. In the performance of duty they were alert and ready, and no European troops could have handled their heavy field-pieces better in difficult ground. On this and on other marches I have seen the twelve-pounders stick fast in a slough, or in the mud, so that no horses could drag them out, when the men instantly yoked to, and with an intelligence and perseverance which did them the greatest credit, extricated them with wonderful quickness, and this several times running within a very short

space. In fact, the passes over which, both in coming and going, they dragged their heavy guns, with little aid from pioneers or tools, would have made an European artillery officer stare. We saw the tracks of the guns where one wheel had gone actually *over* the top of the precipice, and traced them among huge blocks of stone, and on a declivity which seemed calculated to defy all attempts at forcing a passage. Let no one after this say that any road is impracticable for guns.

But it is not from my own knowledge that I speak thus highly of the powers of endurance of the Persian troops. I am borne out by the experience of those who accompanied them in their arduous winter campaigns in Khorasan, when half clad, without shelter at night, and little or no food during the day, they performed the severest duty—investing fortresses, making forced marches, and often having to fight hard, with scarcely a murmur. But then they had their Prince with them, undergoing the same privations, and saw all their officers, both native and European, cheerfully sharing their hardships.

Mr. Macneil, who accompanied the Prince, has told me, that his Royal Highness frequently had not a thing to eat but what he could get by the chase, and they have more than once gone together out to hawk game for dinner, when, on returning, the Prince would make a fair division of the spoil. On other occasions, when his Royal Highness knew that there was no fuel in camp, the ground being covered thick with snow, he would send for Macneil and say, "I know you have no fire—here are a

few *bouttehs* (tufts of weeds) or sticks—come, let us warm ourselves." In such extremities, with a cold many degrees below Zero, the poor soldiers would huddle together, and try to keep each other warm by close contact, and make the best of what could not be avoided. I have heard some of them talk in terms of great horror at their sufferings during this time, particularly when on guard. Among others my friend, Mahomed Tukey Khan, *junior*, of Meymeed, gave me a most vivid account of his first essay in the winter campaign at Khorasan. Yet these men never lost their spirits, nor, still more strange, did they fall into insubordination, or break out into any acts of violence. In their bivouacs, after the severest marches, when grouped together, their conversation would turn, not on their sufferings, but upon the operations of the campaign, on the probabilities of success in their operations against such a fortress, or in such an expedition, and in discussing the merits or the abilities of their several commanders. The march was marked by no sulky silence; on the contrary, the line often resounded with laughter at the jokes that were passing: there was little straggling, and though gaunt with hunger, there never was the smallest attempt at pillaging the stores or provisions belonging to their officers; but if a camel or a bullock *did happen* to drop down on the march, it was generally found *incapable* of rising again, and the poor beast's bones were picked, and kebaubs often made upon the spot with ramrods and bayonets, in a roar of fun and laughter.

Nor was their courage inferior to their other qualifications, as the history of the sieges and sacks of

Toorsheez, Sultan Meidan, Ameerabad, Khabooshan, Serrakhs, &c. would testify, were they fairly narrated,—but I am forgetting that at present I am on the way to Deregez.

As we cleared the gardens of the village, among the groups which still dotted the ground between us and the rocks, we remarked four men armed, and on foot, who, from their dress, appeared to be serbauz, making their way through some irregular ground towards a party upon a little eminence, composed of men, women, and children, perhaps, thirty to forty persons, most of whom were also armed. Thinking that they were soldiers who had lost their way, we sent a horseman to tell them that their bugles had sounded the recall, and to point out the road the regiment had taken; but we observed that the messenger had some difficulty in making them change their direction. They did so at last, however, and, on joining us, we found that they were really serbauz, who were bound on a curious and characteristic errand. One of their companions had been put to death about three nights before, when the camp was at a village called Chushnabat, by the Deregezees, who had surprised him while plundering; and they confessed that they were proceeding towards the group we had seen, in order to retaliate—no matter on whom.—"Wullah!" they said; their hearts were burning for the loss of their comrade, and they were resolved to put as many to death as they could (four at least) by way of revenge; and having seen these people on the tuppeh, whither they had fled from the village, they thought it as well to take them as any

others. The odds were against any one of themselves returning, yet we could scarcely prevail on them to desist. While I spoke to them, and pointed out their folly, their eyes were burning with excitement; and though perfectly respectful in their manner, they remonstrated against being recalled, as if they had been interrupted in the exercise of an undoubted right. They went off grumbling; and I feel persuaded, from the direction they took, that they were resolved still to try their luck before rejoining their regiment; and some of our party not only seemed to think the same, but to consider them as perfectly in the right; for when I was remonstrating with the men, one of them said, "Let them alone, sir; it should be so with them: were a soldier always to calculate odds in danger, would he ever do his duty as he ought? would he ever charge a battery, or face a superior foe? No, no; these men just feel and have done as they ought to do." He was right. But who says such men are not good stuff for soldiers? Long live the Persian serbauz, say I; pay them and command them well, and the Shah need not fear the Russians.

As we plunged into the pass, we could better than before appreciate the amount of resistance which the assailants would have had to encounter; for the barren rocks were all instinct with life, and every stone, cleft, and hollow poured forth its defenders, musket in hand, like the ambushed Highlanders of Rhoderick Dhu, as our cavalcade passed on. Our way lay by the walls of the former capital, Dustgird, which, in the time of Nadir Shah, was a considerable place; but being commanded on all

sides it was found untenable, so that the residence of the Khan was removed to the new fortress of Mahomedabad, while only the gardens of the former place remain. As we approached that place the glacis, or esplanade outside its ditch, presented a curious spectacle, being covered with monstrous heaps of corn-sheaves, piled up in all directions to within pistol-shot of the wall. The crop was everywhere ripe, and every man that could be had, had been employed to cut and carry the produce to this place of security under the guns of the fort. Some of the masses, I suspect, contained grain ready thrashed out; at a distance I really thought that they were some new defences in progress; but the measure would have been dangerous in the face of an active enemy, as the heaps might easily have been set fire to.

On entering the town, however, I saw little that would have led one to suppose it was threatened with a siege, nor did I remark many persons bearing the aspect of able defenders within its walls. The fort itself is a square, defended by a double wall, the outer of which is in fair repair, having a ditch some sixteen or eighteen feet broad, and a *hâk rèze*, or blind of earth, outside of it. Between this and the inner wall, a space of from sixty to eighty yards, was filled with dwellings. The town itself was laid out by streets in regular compartments, but appeared mean and poor, and few of the shops were open. We traversed it in our way to the *ark* or citadel, which was a square castle with round bastions, on a height, and were conducted to a lodging, the same, I learned, as had been occu-

pied by Yelantoosh Khan, whose *empty place* I thus filled, and some of whose people were still here.

Soon after came breakfast—for it was scarcely noon—and then came the Khan himself to pay his respects and give his welcome. He proved to be a little insignificant man, with much the air of a simpleton, and certainly one of the last persons to whom I should, from appearance, have applied the epithet of *dellee*—mad—that is, madly rash and brave. Nor did his conversation go far to give me a more favourable impression of his intellect. His whole desire and object seemed to be to see my guns, and pistols, and European curiosities; and his whole soul was soon so absorbed in admiration of them, that I almost feared he would not be easily induced to part from them; indeed, there was no satisfying him; for, after seeing everything, he longed for more, and seemed fretted when told there was nothing else to see. In the evening I had a pleasanter visit in the person of one Meerza Cossim, brother of my friend, Meerza Reza of Khabooshan, whom I had known there, and who brought to see me a Persian colonel, on duty here from camp; so that my first evening at Mahomedabad passed pleasantly enough. But my comfort was abated by a piece of information communicated by the colonel, which was calculated to excite uneasiness, if not alarm.

Yelantoosh Khan, it appeared, had returned to camp, according to stipulation, about the time I left it; and it had been discovered by this colonel, that the Khan had it in charge to induce the Sirdar (Noor Mahomed Khan) to come to Mahomedabad,

to refresh himself and take the bath, &c., under the pretence that Abbas Koolee Khan would, at his personal solicitation, not only comply with all proposals, in consequence of the honour so done him, but would return with the Sirdar to the camp. Now it appears that this was but a trap to induce the Sirdar to come to Mahomedabad, and the colonel was not without apprehension that the intention might be to detain him as a prisoner there, in order to extort better terms: at all events, compliance on the part of the Sirdar, would have been a bootless and impolitic measure, which the colonel was desirous of warning him against. Other suspicious circumstances, too, had been remarked, such as doubling the guards at the gate of the citadel, and posting others where none had formerly been; and the whole affair wore so bad an aspect, that the colonel begged me to write a note to B—— in English, to guard against the chances of interception, acquainting him with all that had transpired and was suspected. This I accordingly did; and it has just been sent on pretext of being a requisition for some medicine required for a follower of Yelantoosh Khan, who is ill. Now this is a pleasant affair, is it not? For if the Khan means treachery, I may be as well included in its operation as others. Even the sight of my European arms may have moved his cupidity; and there is no calculating on what a *dellee* Khan may take into his head. If he entraps the Sirdar, there is no doubt we too shall be detained; but B—— will not quit camp, and such an outrage would induce

him instantly to invest the place, so that I may have the pleasure of hearing, if not seeing, a siege.

As for the Attock, if I can see it to-morrow from a distance, it is well; but I will not commit myself to the keeping of the Khan's guides, who might play his game in this way even more safely than if I remained in the fort. Besides, there are unpleasant news from thence to-day. It appears that it was the party of Toorkomans destined for Khabooshan who attacked Khooshkhaneh, (the Hawk's Nest,) a village close upon the Attock, from which, in spite of a sharp opposition, they carried off some men and cattle, putting several of the old people to death. These prisoners were, however, retaken by a party of toffunchees, who lay in wait for the Toorkomans at a pass, and killed six or eight of them. Unfortunately for themselves, elated with this success, the Kooshkhanees, collecting about seventy horsemen, pursued the Toorkomans with such imprudent ardour, that only a part came up with the enemy, and these with their horses blown. The Toorkomans, five or six hundred in number, immediately turned, and, killing some, took the whole of the rest prisoners, together with their horses, and including Hussun Khan, son of Shereef Khan of Kooshkhaneh, a remarkably fine youth, and—what is unusual for them—slaughtered the poor fellow and all the rest in cold blood upon the spot. This is said to have been done at the instance of Hoossain Koolee Khan, son of my old friend, Reza Koolee Khan of Khabooshan, who had a deadly feud with Shereef Khan, and had accompanied the Toorkomans on their chuppow. With these affairs occurring around

me every day, it would be madness to think of attempting that quarter of the Attock.

Next morning brought an early visit from the Khan, who again made the survey of my arms; and such was his admiration of a small double-barrelled pistol which I wore in my belt, that I thought it prudent to present it to him, to save the rest. He had set his affections most fervently on my double-barrelled *Purdey*, and told the Meerza that by any or all means it must be his—that he would give horses to any amount for it, but have it he would. The Meerza replied that it was out of the question—he might as well ask me for my wife, so he might set his heart at rest on that score. I had already given him an article which he did not believe I would have parted with to any one, which marked my estimation of his friendship, and that it would never do to make a further application of the sort. In the mean time my desire to ride out and view the Attock was instantly complied with, and after breakfast, that is, about two o'clock, I went forth attended by two horsemen of the Khan's, who took me to a high pass about six miles distant, named the *Kizzel cothul*, or Red pass, from whence I looked right down upon this celebrated plain, which opened out to right and left in a vast expanse of sand, extending even to the banks of the Oxus.

I think you have heard me say that the *Attock*, so notorious as the abode of these rapacious Toorkomans, is nothing more nor less than the *skirt* of the hills which bound the higher regions of Khorasan on the north, and here sink into the desert which forms the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea. Formerly

this skirt, which is watered by the streams from their numerous valleys as well as the plain of Serrakhs, was one of the fairest and richest districts of the Persian monarchy. Every one who has seen this fine plain, which, with the whole banks of the Merve-rood and those of the Moorghab up to Bala Moorghab, and from thence again down the valley of the Heri-rood to Herât, is richly cultivated by Toorkoman tribes, speaks in the highest terms of its extraordinary fertility. At Serrakhs they do not plough the ground, but wait until the rains of spring have inundated the plain, and then they scatter their wheat upon it, and receive eighty to one hundred returns without labour. The melons and other productions of Merve are equally surprising. It is a common saying that two melons of Serrakhs are a camel's load. A friend of ours assured me that they surpassed a mule load. He has seen them so large, that one of their little jockeys getting a stride upon one of them, could not nearly touch the ground on either side with his legs. The Prince sent our friend a present of two when he came to meet his Royal Highness near Serrakhs, and he assured me none of his servants could singly carry either the one or the other, but they were coarse. The water melons are from twelve to fifteen inches through, and run to six feet in length, and these are very good.

These Toorkomans, the *Tekeh*, the *Sălour*, the *Săruch*, and other tribes, build *hissars*, or mud-walled forts, in these districts, round which they pitch their tents; and it is obvious that they are in the transition state from an erratic to a fixed and agricultural

people. It is the natural progress of all such tribes. From their warlike habits they expel the fixed inhabitants of the countries they invade, or make slaves of them, but for a while pursue their pastoral occupations in their new abodes. But the advantages of agriculture, every year more apparent, draw more and more to pursue it; and in time they become fixed like those they displaced, no doubt to be themselves overrun at some future time by tribes who have the same course to go through. All the Eeliaut tribes in Persia are more or less in this state of transition, in which the predatory propensities still remain: well were it for Khorasan if these were worn out among the Toorkomans of Serrakhs and the Attock. But "revenons à nos moutons." In the days of Nadir this district was well peopled with Persian subjects, and its fat soil was made to bear luxuriant crops; but in every feeble reign its vicinity to the homes of the Toorkoman tribes have rendered it a precarious and dangerous abode, and of late these have almost utterly eradicated the fixed inhabitants, destroying towns and villages, and very imperfectly occupying the ruins. The vigorous measures of the late Prince Royal drove back the depredators for some space; but they still swarm on the banks of the Thejen, and in the well-watered districts of the Akhâl and Archumun. Even yet, too, a few of the former inhabitants linger in their old abodes, and the Khans of Kelât, Deregez, Khabooshan, and Boojnoord, had power enough to protect several border villages in their respective countries. Perhaps the Toorkomans themselves felt it their interest to

respect this small remainder to a certain point as affording means of commercial intercourse, and had no wish to drive matters to extremities; but these villagers lead a sad life of danger and alarm; scarcely three days together pass without some attack, and never a week elapses without prisoners being made and lives lost. They cultivate their fields with their match-locks at their backs, and their swords girded on; and when they reap, as at this season, they go in parties and all on horseback; one holds the horses and looks out, while the rest set to work; on an alarm being given, they all mount and scour away to the villages. If they cannot reach them, they make for one of the towers that stud the whole plain like great pigeon houses and astonish a stranger, and, abandoning their horses, shut themselves up, light their matches, and keep their enemies at bay as long as they can. If they are taken, no help for it; if they are relieved, *Alhumdulillah!* thank God for it!—A miserable existence this—a bitter daily bread! No wonder inhabitants are scarce in these parts.

Even as we gazed on the vast expanse, my guides kept looking out for the dust which announces their coming; for not even the very vicinity of Mahomedabad is safe from their sudden visits and persevering attacks. They come by night, and lie concealed within a fursuck of the town, and seize men or cattle, and are off before the horsemen, who are always on the watch, can come up to prevent them. Thus all these districts are perpetual scenes of warfare and alarm, and you scarce can meet with a

person who has not either been made prisoner himself, or has suffered loss in wife, children, or relatives.

Nor are the Toorkomans the only enemies which they have had to contend with. About five years ago, Allee Koolee Khan, the ruler of Khyvah, crossed the desert, and came against Deregez with a large army and several guns, and took one of its forts; but it seemed as if the hand of Providence had been lifted against so wanton an aggressor, for the cholera, which for the first time had appeared in Khorasan, broke out in his camp, and slew, *it is said*, eighteen thousand souls, besides an immense number of camels and horses; so many, at all events, that the army was annihilated, and the Khan fled back to Khyvah almost alone. With all these things full in my mind, and the guides beside me pouring out volumes to the same effect concerning it, you will not wonder that I viewed with intense interest this great desert, which spread before me like a vast brown sea, losing itself in boundless space.

On my return from this interesting ride, I found one of my servants, who had been sent from camp with a note from B——, to say, that in consequence of my information, the Sirdar had given up all thoughts of going to Mahomedabad; upon finding which, Yelantoosh Khan had made an effort to quit camp, but had been detained according to his own pledge; that several of the Deregez hostages, already on their way, had been recalled by Abbas Koolee Khan, and that all things looked like a break up of the negotiations. As for me, the sooner

I made my way back to camp, he thought, the better, and that as a lust after my enviable double-barrelled Purdey might prove a strong motive for detaining my person, he sent me an old musket in a case, which I might exchange, and so smuggle the precious article out of danger. The latter part of the scheme was rendered abortive in consequence of the servant having omitted to bring the musket case or cover: as to the rest, I communicated the contents to the Colonel, (Hussun Allee Khan,) who told me I need be under no apprehensions as to myself, for that the Khan meant nothing but fair play and honourable treatment to me.

He had scarcely said so when the Khan entered, and remained with me the whole evening, and took dinner with me, in which he was joined by the Colonel and Meerza Cossim. The evening passed on pleasantly enough until a messenger came in with the news to the Khan of the detention in camp of Yelantoosh Khan. This greatly changed his cheer, but he recovered and consoled himself with continually snapping the caps of the pistol I had given him, and occasionally firing it off, just like a child with a new plaything. His conversation this night had no tendency to raise him in my opinion; I gathered indeed some desultory information from it, for he had been at Khyvah, and knew something of the circumjacent countries; but his conceit was most ludicrous; he imagined the whole safety of the border districts to rest upon his sole exertions,—that he had performed what no one else could have done; and he talked of giving up the charge, of expatriat-

ing himself, leaving his country to the Kajars to make the most of, if they will but give him bread, and predicts that they will then learn to understand the greatness of their loss. While dining in the open air in the court before my lodging, we had another unwelcome visitation, like that I have described in camp, in the shape of a monstrous black scorpion, which animals grow here, it seems, to an enormous size; he ran right among us, and over the cloth and dishes, brandishing his tail above him and putting us all to flight, like a parcel of children, colonel, Khan, pistol and all.

I had mentioned to the Khan my desire to take leave of him on the morrow, to which, after politely pressing me to remain for some time and see the amusements of the place, he consented, and I prepared accordingly. Next morning, as I was visiting the Colonel, who should make his appearance in the yard before the Deewankhaneh but the Khan, riding on a black horse with a fine saddle and bridle, which, dismounting, he handed over to his meerachor, who in turn showed off and vapoured away for a while. I then was given to understand that this horse was intended as a present to me in return for my pistol. It certainly was no great things, but there is an old saying about "gift horses," so I only thanked the Khan for his kindness, and begged leave to depart. This was immediately given, together with a promise of guides; and a request was preferred for a letter expressive of my satisfaction with the chief's behaviour to myself. This I readily gave, for *I* had no personal cause of discontent, whatever the Persian government might have; and bidding adieu

to the colonel, who promised me an escort of two horsemen, I left them, that I might breakfast and get ready.

These matters being soon adjusted, I sallied forth with two guides, who were to conduct me to the gates, where the appointed guard was said to be awaiting me. On reaching it, however, no one was to be seen, and my worthy guides stood gaping about, well knowing, no doubt, that we were looking for what had never been ordered. Here therefore we stuck, for to proceed without some escort in the existing condition of affairs would have been folly; and I began to suspect some evil design, when a person whom I recognized as the Khan's Jeloodar came up, and, after "burning all the fathers" of the imaginary guides, swore he would guide us himself. Accordingly, catching hold of a yaboo which was passing, he threw himself upon its back, and clapping heels to its sides, summoned us to follow. Too happy to be quit of the place on any terms, we rashly trusted to his word, and off we went. The first irregularity he committed was taking up a person behind him, which undoubtedly impeded our movements. But scarcely had he gone a mile, when up came a man who proved to be the yaboo's owner, and who, after a sharp wrangle, fairly dispossessed our guide of the beast, and left him on foot. This was all a trick. Up came the dismounted cavalier with a rueful face to complain that he must now proceed on foot. "On foot then be it," said I; "for, as you have undertaken the task, depend on it you shall go through with it." But fearing that he might bolt, I placed him on one of my own yaboos,

and on we went. But scarcely had we got again into motion, when meeting another man, he jumped off, and seizing hold of him, said, "Here is your mark! this fellow is a capital guide—just the man you want;—he will show you the way to camp; as for me, I must return home." "Not one bit of you," said I; "what you have undertaken you must perform. What do I know of this fellow?—how am I to know whether this is truth or a lie?" The wretch then began to kiss my foot, and entreat to be let off; swore that the Khan would want him, that he was a mourner for his brother who was just dead, and a dozen other lies, till the Meerza, quite out of patience, silenced him by hitting him some sharp cuts with his whip. I was just going to seize and make him mount the yaboo again, when the fellow, watching his time, dropt my skirt which he was holding, and leaving his own slippers in the middle of the road, bolted like a shot over a garden wall on our left. Angry as I was, I could not help laughing at seeing the great man's servant, no small man himself, bounding off barefooted like a frightened hare. I drew a pistol and swore to shoot him if he did not stop; but he never heeded, and scudded and twisted on among the bushes till we lost sight of him. I did think of giving him a dose of small shot in the rear, just to tickle him, but I desisted; and turning to the other fellow, a real country bumpkin, who stood staring aghast at what was going on, told him that as the Jeloodar had played him this trick, there was no help for it—he must guide me. The poor creature cried and begged like a whipt child; but as I really did not know my way, and was still

within the *derbend*, where, for all I knew, I might be stopped, I thought it necessary to have some one with me who knew the country; so off we went, he still sobbing and entreating, and I threatening and promising him by turns.

At length the formidable gates were passed without question: my way was clear, and I dismissed my unwilling guide, who was as abject in his thanks as he had been in his fears. The behaviour of the Jéloodar was truly Persian. The Khan was not in fault; he had given his orders, but his rascally servants had forgot, or did not think fit to execute them, — perhaps they wanted a bribe, — and when they saw me resolved on returning to head quarters, which would have procured them the bastinado. They had nothing for it but to try, as they did, to wheedle me out of the place, and trust to getting out of the scrape with me afterwards as best they might. It nearly cost the Jeloodar a dose of number six on his posteriors.

In three hours we traversed the plain, and by a little before sunset had ascended the lofty pass of *Allah-hu-Akber*, from which, as from the top of a wall, we overlooked the plain of Deregez, with all its wave-like hills and surrounding mountains, and the Attock, dim, vast, and misty, the appropriate abode of these devastating savages, who sweep like a blasting wind from it over more favoured regions. It was a most impressive and magnificent scene. On the way up I passed some eighty or ninety families of the runaways, returning according to treaty from Deregez to their abandoned homes: part of the thousand families claimed by the government

of Khorasan — poor, worn, and weak they seemed, certainly no loss to Deregez, and as little gain to others. It was painful to see the miserable creatures driven, toiling up the mountains with their wives and baggage, under a guard. It reminded me of the gangs of slaves I have seen of yore, removing from one place to another in the West Indies; and a more disgusting sample of the operation of despotic rule could not have been witnessed than this hounding and herding a body of human beings, like cattle, against their will, from the habitations they had selected, to others which they had fled from.

Perched on the top of the pass, I found my friend B—— encamped with twelve hundred men and some guns to watch the progress of the negotiation. With him I passed the night, and was rejoiced to find him greatly recovered from his illness. Heaven knows the heat of Deregez could be wholesome for no one. Next morning we parted, and I own I felt no small pain at bidding adieu to an individual of so much talent and so many noble qualities, left thus friendless and alone among people who neither felt his value nor appreciated his services; — many of whom had of necessity become his enemies, and none of whom would care much what might become of him if disabled; who tolerate him only while he is useful, and who, in order to secure continuance of his services, hold back from him his justly-earned rewards, lest from disgust and despair he should be tempted and have the means of quitting them. The fate of poor B—— with all his errors, and he has many no doubt, made my heart bleed: it is a theme

to moralize on, had I not too much conscience so to tax your patience; but I could not help reflecting, as I quitted him, on the strange freak of fortune that had thrown two individuals so different in character, in country, and circumstances, and assimilating only in one point—that of being equally strangers in this distant land—to pass a night together on the top of a remote Persian *cot,hul,* overlooking the vast plains of Tartary. What foot-balls of chance do we appear to be!—how little control have the wisest of us over our own destiny! and yet every hair of our heads is numbered; every step we take is foreknown and guided by a hand that cannot err. The sure knowledge of this it is that constitutes the traveller's comfort.

An hour's descent of a most rugged and steep pass brought me to the camp of the Sirdàr Noor Mahomed Khan, who had pitched in a pleasant valley by a stream at the southern foot of the mountain. This great man, in the true Persian spirit, took upon himself the whole credit of what had been done. When first I called on him, I found Yelantoosh Khan seated in the tent, and he could say little; but no sooner had that worthy retired than he sent for me again, and opened out his plans for the rest of the campaign, as he wished for my good word at Tehran. After making many inquiries as to what I had seen at Mahomedabad, he observed,—"We have gained several great points by the conduct *I* have pursued. In the first place, we have got hold of one *Shaitán*" (devil)—meaning Yelantoosh Khan. "When he came into us at Mushed, we could not detain him, as it would have been a flagrant breach

of faith; but now he is taken upon his own *hoojjut* (pledge), and until that is redeemed, *inshallah!* we shall not part with him. We shall send him to *Siberia*," added he laughing, meaning thereby the state-prison of Ardebeel, "or perhaps we may put him to death for his past sins. Kelât he never shall see again, unless the treaty to which he is party be fulfilled; and then we gain on the other hand, for, in the first place, we get back our runaway families, thereby weakening the Deregez men; then we secure the *sirhud* (frontier), which otherwise we could not do; and, please God, that fool will some day or other put himself again in our power; and then, if he flies, as you say he threatens, we have his kinsfolk here, and his brother will answer our purpose as well as he, though, mad as he is, the present man is the best. As for the other fox, he too, *inshallah!* will soon run his head into another noose if he escapes this time: yes, yes, you will see, their day is nearly done. In the mean time, matters do not go on badly; the army is at free quarters, grain in abundance, and in two days, if all is not right, down shall go the guns again, and we shall burn his very father in Mahomedabad."

He then gave loose to a powerful stream of abuse against the intrigues of his enemies in Mushed,—and assuredly the whole of this affair exhibits as pretty and complicated a specimen of Persian politics, or rather low cabal, as one could desire to see. The Vizier at Mushed, jealous of the influence which the Sirdâr would acquire should he succeed in the object of this expedition, thwarts and cripples his measures so far as he can. The colonel, a Peish-

khidmet of the Prince's, and Meerza Cossim, the Sirdâr's envoys at Mahomedabad, are, on the one hand, cheating the Sirdâr their employer, and taking all manner of bribes from the Khan, whom, on the other hand, they betray into useless procrastination and ruinous resistance. The Khan again plumes himself on the cleverness with which he is humbugging the Sirdâr, and has cajoled him into quitting the *julgeh* (plain) of Deregez. He told my Meerza with great glee that they were all his dupes,—yet he was a good deal startled at hearing of the detention of Yelantoosh Khan and the occupation of the pass of Allah-hu-Akber by B——. Yelantoosh Khan perhaps is the only one who thinks himself *cheated*, and his followers complained bitterly of the sacrifice he had made of himself for one who was playing so double and selfish a part. As for the Sirdâr, *he* feels confident in his own dexterity, and trusts that the same ability, to which solely he attributes his success hitherto, will enable him to discomfort all his secret as well as his open foes. In the mean time the country is ruined, according to the most approved method of Kajar policy; they destroy instead of conciliating the old families; they depopulate district after district, and then call it quiet,—pacificated: "*Desertam faciunt, pacem appellant*," was never more fully illustrated.

LETTER XII.

Thaveree. — Wounded cow. — Breeds of horses. — Sheerwan. — Boojnourd.—Nejjeff Allee Khan.—Delays.—Jaffer Koolee Khan. —Pic-nic party to a garden.—A present.—A great man's whim, or meanness.—Leave Boojnourd.—Toorkoman doings.—An impressive view.—A Toorkoman village.—An Alachik or tent described.—Toorkoman fare. — An old lady's wrath. — Another Obah.—Alarming preparations. — Fishing.— Feasting. — Obah the Third. — A moving house and worthy host.—The Monah valley.—Semulghan.—A row.

TAKING a guide from the Sirdâr's camp, I pushed on to Thaveree, where I had spent a night on my way to camp, and it was as curious as pleasant to remark the altered reception which I now met with. The moment we were recognized, men, women, and children came out to welcome us; they assisted us to dismount, had our old lodging ready in a moment, and the little fellows who had gone a-fishing with me before, were all agog to be at the sport again; they even brought me the very rod I had used before. I indulged them, and we caught a capital dish of fish. But I was seriously incommoded here by the state of my own establishment, which was now sadly reduced. At Mushed I had been forced to get two new servants, a groom and a muleteer; the first, a rascal in grain, had been punished for some faults committed in camp, and

had refused to go any further; and the second, who had got a severe tertian fever in camp at Deregez, was unable to go beyond the Sirdâr's camp, where I left the poor fellow shaking as if he were falling to pieces in a desperate ague fit. With this reduced muster of servants I had to look after an increased number of horses, which, distrusting as I did my jeloodar, was a serious matter, without taking into account the country which I was about to traverse, where every armed man I could carry was required; but these are among the accidents which a traveller must make up his mind to, and he who cannot do so had best stay at home.

On the following morning we took our leave, followed by the good wishes of the whole village, who regarded us as excellent people, because we paid our way and did no injury. One old woman, indeed, made an attempt to disturb the harmony that prevailed, by producing with much outcry her cow, which exhibited a severe cut on its hinder parts, inflicted with some sharp weapon. She fain would have laid this assault to the charge of one of my servants; but it was obvious upon inspection that the cut was not fresh, and a little inquiry traced it to a party of serbauz who had passed through the place on the previous day. The effect, or rather absence of apparent effect, of this severe cut upon the poor creature's movements, might be received as testimony in proof of the correctness of a passage in Bruce's Travels, which has been the subject of considerable doubt, for the wound gaped as widely as if a substantial steak had been taken out, and yet

its action in walking did not appear to be at all impeded.

Our way lay through some pretty green valleys leading into each other by small passes, and each having its little system of forts and villages; but many of these were deserted, the inhabitants being among the persons who had fled to Deregez, and many and eager were the inquiries which were put to us respecting their friends. This series of valleys was formerly apportioned out by Nadir Shah to his Koordish followers, whose descendants, where not swept away by later tyranny, still hold their paternal property; many were at this time on service in the camp. It is a great horse-breeding country; and in some of the *julgehs*, as they call these fertile valleys here, we saw a number of mares and young horses feeding knee-deep in the rich natural grass. Several very fine colts were offered me for sale; and had I had more dependence on the honesty of my servants and more ready cash, I might have been tempted to carry off with me some of the beautiful creatures.

The whole of Northern Khorasan, especially the districts we were now traversing, used of old, and in the days of Nadir particularly, to be famous for its breed of horses; here were the celebrated horses of Meer Goonah Khan of Chinnaran, and the *Koor Ogloo*, the *Sheer*, the *Bee-izzád*, the *Kem-Yál*, the *Chupraslie*, the *Akhál*, and many other breeds, of which, though the most of them are now extinct, and have given way to others, the feats and general excellence are still the theme of every tongue. The original Toorkoman and Khorasanee

breeds were greatly improved by Nadir by a large admixture of Arab blood, which increased their powers of endurance as well as their beauty. In a former work I have alluded to exploits of the horses of this country, and I could now amuse you or your jockey friends with more of the same sort; but the value of such stories depends on their perfect authenticity, and where that cannot exactly be ascertained, it is useless to relate them. I must, however, correct *one* error which I fell into in the work alluded to. It is there mentioned, I think, that Dr. Macneil, having received accounts of Dr. Jukes's illness at Ispahan, took three horses from his own and the envoy's stables, and mounting immediately, rode without stopping, except to feed, two hundred and forty miles. He performed it in sixty-seven hours, of which full fourteen were consumed in halts,—that is at the rate of ninety miles a day. The jeloodar who carried the news to Tehran performed the journey on one horse in seventy-eight hours, and rode him back to Ispahan in about ninety, arriving somewhat less than twenty-four hours after Dr. Macneil.

I am tempted to mention to you one feat of an Arab horse, the property of a person who has more than once been mentioned by me in these letters, Aga Bahram, and which has not, so far as I know, been ever doubted. This animal came from Shirauz to Tehrân, five hundred and twenty miles, in six days, remained there three days, went back in five, remained at Sheerauz nine, and returned again to Tehrân in seven days. This same gentleman told me that he had once rode another horse of his own

from Tehrân to Koom, twenty-four fûrsucks or about eighty-four miles, between the dawn of a morning near the vernal equinox, and two hours before sunset, that is, in about ten hours; this too is good going, but Aga Bahram had always the best horses in Persia.

After a hot march, which led us, among other places, by the village of Dowlut Khaneh, which but a few days before had been plundered by the Toorkomans, we reached another village, Karacheh, situated in a beautifully verdant valley, with a fine stream, near which we bivouacked for the night, picketing our horses and mules in the most delicious grass, and spreading our own carpets upon the same, under a brilliant evening sky. The mountains around were rocky and barren, and the stratification they exhibited was of a very remarkable, and often grotesque character.

5th July.—We were on our horses at four of a delicious morning, which turned to a very hot day. Our road to Sheerwan, about twenty-five miles distant, lay among and over groups of lofty hillocks on the skirts of the mountains forming the northern boundary of the great valley of Khabooshan and Sheerwan. We had left the green and fertile *julgehs* for a higher and more barren tract, a change which our horses felt to the full as much as ourselves, for there were no sweet bites of grass to be had during our occasional halts, and we arrived hot and parched at Sheerwan, (an old halt of mine, but in very different weather, for the ground was then deep in snow,) where the lameness of a mule obliged us to terminate our march for the day. Sheerwan, once

a well fortified place, is now a ruin;—it had once three thousand inhabitants; there are not now, I should think, three hundred.

9th July.—Boojnoord. Another of my old stages. Sheerwan was in a stir from a threatened attack of Toorkomans upon a fort in its vicinity; but we could not afford to be over prudent and pushed on for this place. Our way lay through a dangerous country, and we rode with arms prepared for action. Two passes, the Cothul of *Alák-habund*, and the defile of *Derreh Shoor*, the Salt Valley, are particularly infested by thieves; and by another in sight on the right, that of Kallah-Zooh, which leads without any considerable obstacle direct from the Attock, the Toorkomans commonly enter these districts. All this had to me a peculiar interest, for I well remembered the leading features of the country; and the tales of border story and pillage, which gave each spot a local celebrity, invested the whole scene with a hue of romance which it is impossible to communicate to others. Harvest had everywhere commenced, and in many places was far advanced: in some of the fine valleys, and particularly on the plain of Hazâr jereeb, which is covered with *Daimeh* cultivation, (that is, produced without artificial irrigation,) all the bullocks and asses were in requisition for carrying home the corn in shock. In other places you saw a plundered or deserted village with its corn all standing, and a painful look of desolation and abandonment brooding over it. A sharp ascent by the *Ak-Cothul*, or White Pass, and a winding descent among waving hills, brought us at five o'clock in the afternoon, and after a march of about

thirty-eight miles, to the pleasant and well-known valley of Boojnoord, where, after some delay, I got lodgings in the house of the Khans Naib.

Nejeff Allee Khan of this place, the only one of the Khorasanee chiefs who has had prudence and luck sufficient to maintain his ground in the late sweep made by the Persian government, is now an old and broken man, far different from what I remember him on my former journey. He recollected me however, and after allowing me a day to rest, a sort of etiquette sometimes observed, gave me the meeting yesterday. But he is one of your *hard* politicians who never express strong feeling, and perhaps have none, so that I received no great pleasure from the interview. He told me that the thousand reports of chuppows effected and threatened by the Toorkomans, had certainly some foundation in truth; that no doubt preparations were being made in the desert, and that mischief would be done. He confirmed the news I had heard at Deregez of the cold-blooded murder of Shereef Khan of Dowlut Khaneh's son, and told me that any attempt to visit the Tekeh country at present was out of the question, as he expected them to come in force every moment upon his own frontier. He promised, however, to give me a sure guide through the Monah valley to the Goklan tribes of Gourgaun, and from thence among them and the Yamoots to Asterabad; but nothing in these parts is done speedily, and so I foresee considerable delay at this place. I found here a very different, and I suspect a truer version of the boasted victory over the Toorkomans which had been reported at Mushed, in which Allee

Khan and Mehdee Koolee Khan, the Persian leaders, were taken prisoners. It appears in fact to have been a defeat, in which a very considerable number of serbauz, as well as irregular horse, were killed; and what was still more painful, Mehdee Koolee Khan, who had been wounded, was put to death in cold blood on the retreat by the Toorkomans, in retribution for one of their leaders, who also died of his wounds.

10th July.—Last night our future guide waited on us, to talk over the prospects of our journey. He is a favourite servant of the Khan's, and is said to be perfectly acquainted with the whole country; but I was rather unfavourably impressed by the manner in which he boasted of his own perfections. This morning I visited the Khan in hopes of taking leave; but he told us that the fact of a thousand Toorkomans having mounted and made for this quarter, had now become so certain, that he could not permit us to depart until he could be sure where the blow would fall; that we were his guests, the light of his eyes, and that were anything to befall us his honour would be utterly lost,—so that we must just make ourselves contented where we were, and ride out and divert ourselves until he should consider it safe to dismiss us. All we could do or say was to acquiesce in the Khan's arrangements, which, no doubt, however distasteful to me, are really well meant,—for what interest can he have in detaining persons with whom he has no personal connection, and whom he considers it imperative on him to maintain at his own expense? Accordingly we rode out that afternoon to a garden a little way

from the town, where we amused ourselves with eating apricots, and seeing Jaffer Koolee Khan, the old gentleman's son, shoot sparrows with an air-gun cane.

This Jaffer Koolee Khan, however, does not always make sparrows his game. He is one of the bravest fellows and best soldiers in Khorasan, and a deadly successful foe to the Toorkomans. While I was at Mushed, some prisoners and heads were sent in, taken by him in a sharp attack upon a superior party of Tekehs, and he has frequently turned the tables upon them, beating up their quarters on the banks of the T,hejen or Akhâl with a body of his border horse. I was very desirous of cultivating an intimacy with this young man, to whom I had letters from a friend; but this very circumstance, I apprehend, militated against my wishes; for the father, who is evidently jealous of his rising fame, remarked to my companion the Meerza, that he was surprised the letters had not been addressed to him. —"Why write to Jaffer Koolee, while I myself am here?" said he. To this jealousy I attribute not only a reserve on the part of the son, but a certain stiffness, if not coolness, on the part of the father, which surprised me much in one from whom I looked for a more cordial reception; but such jealousy is not uncommon with chiefs who feel themselves on the wane, either physically or politically.

11th July.—The young man asked me to ride with him out to a garden about three miles distant, to spend the day in greater comfort than the heat of the dusty town would permit. It was a rambling

wilderness of apricot, peach, and apple trees, and vines half smothered in grass and weeds; but was pleasant from its freshness and shade. There was a summer-house in the centre, in which played a fountain and cascade; and here we sat and ate excellent kebaubs for breakfast, with sherbet of sour grapes, and plenty of half ripe apricots,—after which we talked for a while, and then they all fell asleep except myself, who set to work at writing. In the evening we received the grateful intelligence that the Khan had agreed to let us depart on the morrow, and would, before we started, give us his "*Khodah Hafiz*" in person.

I must here mention a circumstance which tells as much for the kindness and hospitality of our friend the Naib, our mehmander, as it does against our host, his master. The former, during our stay in his house, had certainly done his best to render us comfortable, while we, on our parts, endeavoured to give as little trouble as possible, and the best understanding existed between us. He heard that I had been inquiring about good Toorkoman horses, and proposed presenting me with a horse of his own, which was, he said, a prime one, as a mark of his esteem. Whether or not he presumed that such a present would assuredly elicit a return, I am unable to say; but it appears there was no chance of his profiting by the transaction in any way: at all events, I did not leave him in doubt on this subject. The horse was sent; I refused it as a present, but offered to purchase it, to which the reply was, that the horse was mine at all events; I might put what price I pleased upon him. I did not dislike the

animal, but I did the nature of the transaction; so, to try the man, I sent him fifty ducats, which I considered its full value at Tehran, although it was more highly estimated here, with a request that if that sum was not enough the horse might be received back. This was not done, however; the Naib remarking, that had I offered twenty ducats, it would have been the same to him.

It turned out to be so in reality, for when the Khan heard of the sale he asked the poor man how much he had got for his horse: the Naib told him. "Where is the money?" demanded the Khan. "Here," said his servant, handing him the bag. The great man took it, and, deliberately dividing the gold into shares, kept twelve for himself, gave seven to one of his own sons, five to another, and so on till only four were left; these he graciously gave back to the Naib, who received it as a high mark of favour.

"What of it?" was his reply to my burst of indignant astonishment at hearing the story; "is not all I have from the Khan? If I eat (that is, *appropriate*, consume) a hundred tomauns of his goods, he says nothing to me; I am very well off with what I have got, for, after all, the horse was *peishcush-e-sahib*," (a present to you, sir,) and no doubt the Khan will make it up to me in some way or other." I was as much amused as provoked with this affair, and spoke to the Meerza of it in high terms of disgust. "Ah!" replied he, "great men do these sort of things often: the Naib says true;—who can tell but to-morrow he may give him a horse worth sixty tomauns?" But I retained my own opinion of the

Khan's conduct. As for the poor Naib, I had made up a small present of English knives and scissors, and some common jewellery for his wife, on which he came and reproached me for making him ashamed, as he said; and, in an hour, the lady sent me little nick-nacks of the country in return, certainly worth three of my small donation. Surely this man was disinterestedly kind and liberal;—his name, which I shall not forget, was Nejjeff Beg.

12th July.—Once more in motion, thank Heaven! In the morning the Khan insisted on seeing us, and was wonderfully gracious. He certainly did appear to have made all possible arrangements for our comfort, but was almost ludicrously particular in laying down our course and stages, leaving us less discretion in the matter than I could have wished. It was the habit of command mingling with the tedious pertinacity of age, but it was all well meant, so we made no wry faces on the occasion. Our first stage being only to a village some six miles distant from the town, we did not move till after breakfast, when, bidding our kind host adieu, we mounted our horses and departed. Lenger, our resting-place, is a pleasantly situated village, and we bivouacked for the night under a grove of apricot and apple trees, our horses having almost enough grass for the night at their pickets. Wherever we go, the atrocities of the Toorkomans, and the sufferings of the villagers, are the pregnant theme of interest. This place, some years ago, even so close to Boojnourd, had been the scene of a horrid tragedy. The village being suddenly attacked, a number of the people took refuge in a large tower: the Toorkomans resolved to drive them

out, piled straw, and wood, and grass beneath, and set fire to it. Some preferred death, even by burning, to such a captivity; others attempted to escape by leaping down on the side opposite to the fire, and, breaking their limbs, met with a miserable death. From twenty to thirty suffered in this manner; the rest were dragged away captives, and the blackened tower still stands a memorial of the atrocity.

One of the villagers, who had lately been a prisoner, came to see me. He was a horseman in the Khan's service, and had been taken by the Toorkomans in a skirmish at a place called *Pool-e-Khatoon*, or the Ladies' Bridge. He says he was slightly wounded in the action, but after that was over, received no wanton ill treatment. But they tied his hands before him and his elbows behind his back, and put a chain round his neck, and forced him to walk thus hampered, and with naked feet, for twelve days and nights, to Merve. His feet, he says, were all one wound from the stones and thorny herbs, and his neck and arms chafed into sores by the friction of the ligatures. At Merve he was confined for three months, with his feet in the stocks, lest he should run away; and his food was bread and water, with, occasionally, a little meat soup. After that time he persuaded his captors to take him to Akhâl, a place near his own country, where he could treat for ransom, which was fixed at a sum of about 60*l.* sterling. But how was this to be raised? All he had was sold by his orders, but the deficiency was still great. There was but one other resource—one sacrifice more to be made. At the taking at Serrakhs the Khan had presented him with a female captive,

"a very pretty woman," he assured me, and he had got very fond of her, and would fain have kept her: but what was to be done? while a slave himself she was lost to him; so to gain his liberty he was forced to part with the solace of his life. She was valued at about 20*l.*; his other property made up the rest; he bade adieu to love and welcomed freedom. "And now, sir," said he, "I am a poor fellow without a decent coat to wear in your presence!"

13th July.—We were on foot before the sun, and ascended a rocky pass to a green spot called Ahôr, where there is a spring of the coldest and most delicious water I ever tasted. It is a favourite resort of the Khan, who goes thither, and pitches his tents in the heats, to enjoy the fresh mountain breezes. Fresh air there is indeed in abundance, for the elevation is very great; but it deserves attention for another reason; for from a height close to it may be enjoyed a *coup d'œil*, which, much as it has been my fate to see of Persian scenery, I have never beheld equalled—no, not even by the view from the top of Koh-e-Meyomeid. Far on the left stretched the valley of Semulghan, bounded on one side by the huge mountain ridges of Aladaugh and Yemân, beyond which rose the still loftier peaks of Q'òorq'ôot; at our feet, beyond an intervening ladder of descents and irregular ground, lay the fine valley of Mônah, which drains a great part of the country, and forms the bed of the infant Attruck. Into this, on either side, other ravines open, each conveying its tributary rill, while further on the broader vale of the Attruck, in which the *strath* of the Mônah is lost, was seen winding away till lost in distance, the course of the

stream being marked by a green stripe in the arid breadth around it. But the broad space to the right formed the most impressive part of the scene—impressive from its aspect of total and utter desolation.

The hills, which in this part separate the valley of the Attruck from the Attock or Desert, are low and broad, and divided into numerous ridges which have no pretensions to picturesqueness, and, like many other districts of minor hills in Persia, suggested the idea of petrified waves; but each ridge was again subdivided, and each subdivision furrowed and reticulated to an infinite degree, so that the whole surface, viewed as we saw it from a height, assumed, on a magnificent scale, just the appearance of a sandy sea-beach, fretted by winds and waters into wave-like ridges; and that verse of "The Ancient Mariner" came forcibly to my recollection,—

> "For thou art long, and lank, and brown,
> As is the sea-ribb'd sand."

No words, at least none that I can command, will convey to you a just idea of the powerfully impressive effect produced upon the mind by so prodigious an extent and succession of, not *sea*-ribbed, but *weather*-ribbed mountains, stretching away into misty dimness: one felt its utter desertness like a load upon the heart. No water blesses this intricate maze of hillocks save two or three small springs, that are absorbed almost as soon as they appear, and a few salt wells. The former are well known to the Toorkomans, and as these "*Hurduls*," or "Teppehs," as such hills are called, are everywhere pervious to mounted men, this district is found to be one of

those which suffer most from their attacks. The knowledge of this fact,—the consciousness that these vast and dreary wastes might at that moment be rife with such lurking savages, as the scorpion haunts the ruin, or my friends the *rooteils* the smooth and verdant sahrah,—deepened the interest with which we gazed on the striking scene; and I could not refrain from taking on the spot a slight and feeble sketch as a memorandum of one of the most remarkable scenes of savage nature I ever saw.

In the fore-ground—that is, in the fine valley of Monah, just at our feet as it seemed, but far, far below us, lay two or three small villages, each surrounded by an encampment of wooden houses. These were the homes of certain tribes of Goklan Toorkomans to which we were to go; and thither, accordingly, we hastened, to try if haply we might find something wherewith to assuage a certain gnawing, which, no doubt assisted by that same keen air of the mountain, had begun to attack us all with violence. The descent was long and rough enough to try our patience as well as our *stomachs;* but at length we approached the *obah,* or camp of *Alachiks,* or *cannauts,* as their wooden houses are called, near which we were met by all the *reish suffeeds,* or elders of the tribe, who, having heard of our approach, came out to welcome us. This they did by taking my hand between theirs, and they led our horses by the bridles to the tent which had been prepared for us, and where we found all the women drawn out to receive us. They were a fearful set of hags as ever represented the sex; but they saluted us courteously, by placing their hands upon our arms, as though they would

have embraced us, and we as courteously received their greeting, after which we entered.

The tents or houses of these tribes have been, I believe, already described; but as these descriptions may not be within your reach, a short sketch may perhaps be acceptable. Conceive a circular chamber of fourteen feet diameter, with walls five feet high, and a roof rising in a flattened cone to about four feet more; a door to the north, and a hole at the top to let in light, having fitted to it a piece of black felt, which is shut by a cord when the sun peeps in too powerfully. The frame-work of the walls is formed of slips of wood, half an inch thick by an inch broad, and seven or eight feet long, which cross each other diagonally, being tacked together at each crossing by a thong of hide; these, when stretched out, form an open lattice work, but, when put up, fold into very small space. It would not be easy, without a drawing, to explain the ingenious manner in which the roof is formed by similar wood slips, rising, as I have observed, into a sort of flattened cone. The wall frames are then girt round with a worked strap of woollen stuff of about a foot wide, which gives them solidity, and over this is rolled the sheet of thick black felt which forms the true shelter from heat or cold. Above this is bound a slight frame-work of split cane, placed upright and laced together. One or two or more pieces of thick felt, well secured with woollen ropes, are drawn over the roof, and the house stands complete, and so firm that no wind will shake it; yet it can be taken down or put up, should time press, in a quarter of an hour.

The interior ornaments of this dwelling were as characteristic as its fabric. All abominations and family trash had been removed in honour of the strangers. At the side opposite the door, upon an elevated stage of wood, was piled the bedding of the household, from which a heap of pillows were taken for us to lean upon. The floor was spread with a home-made carpet and coarse felts; around the walls were hung little square and oblong carpets, gay in colour, and in pattern of the size and shape of picture frames, which had a very pretty effect; and some of which, as red and white predominated in their fabric, reminded me of the Canadian and Indian ornaments which one occasionally sees hanging in halls at home. A few scimeters and such arms were the only other things visible.

The tent was soon and unceremoniously filled, for almost every one who was led thither by curiosity, that is to say, the whole *obah*, sat down without reserve, ceremony being a thing of which the Toorkoman tribes have no sort of idea. Fresh bread, with butter-milk and water, were brought in plenty, and on these some of the party fell at once to work. But as I had a hint that a junta of three old ladies were at that moment busy at work upon a certain dish intended as a treat to us, I had the great virtue to abstain for a full hour. At the end of that time in came three wooden trays filled with a particular composition, which by them is called *cătlemăh*, and is in fact a species of paste or pie-crust made of flour and butter, which, after being well kneaded and baked, is thrown hissing hot into a dish of melted butter, all of which it absorbs. It is mon-

strously rich and greasy, as you may imagine, but to a well-sharpened appetite it was no bad thing, and this I practically demonstrated by the impression which I made on the store that was set before us.

To each of the old ladies who cooked it I then had to make a donation; but their expectations were not unreasonable, and having thus refreshed ourselves and discharged our duty, we mounted in order to proceed towards another *obah*. I found, however, that liberality will not always insure universal content, for on inquiring what had moved the wrath of a certain old dame, who seemed highly excited, it appeared that her indignation had been kindled at my servant because he had refused her a piece of white sugar, an article of which they are extremely fond, but of which, unfortunately, I had very little left. "What!" said the worthy dame, "to go and not leave me one bit of sugar to sweeten my teeth!" Her teeth indeed! I doubt if she had one left to sweeten.

The next *obah* was scarcely a mile off, and I would fain have dispensed with halting at it; but it appeared that the Khan had directed that we should be paraded through every village as we passed, and our guide was too matter-of-fact a person not to obey orders and insist on our obedience too; besides, the people expected us, so go we must, and go we did, hoping that an hour's halt and a dish of tea to the elders would be the extent of our sacrifice. But no, we must stay and eat; they made a point of it. Eat! with the câtlemâh of the last village still sticking in our throats?—I objected the impossibility of the thing; but that

was no rule—or rather the objection was overruled. Eat we must; to leave the *obah* without using teeth and claws would be an insult not to be thought of; at worst, I presumed it would be but another dose of câtlemâh, so down we sat. Good simple souls! little did we know what awaited us; but, pending the appearance of the viands, my guns and pistols underwent a strict examination, and I astonished the good folks by the sight of some Promethean and Lucifer matches, &c. &c.

While this went on, I was startled by some ominous sounds, and observed certain preparations that brought the perspiration on my brow: the sounds were the bleating of a dying sheep, the preparations the erection of a triangle before one of the doors, from which a huge caldron was suspended above a newly-kindled fire; and into this receptacle three most desperate business-like witches—*three* seems to be the magic number—poured *three* skins full of water. There needed no ghost to tell what all this indicated, and, smitten with horror at the idea of such a feast as these extensive preparatives foreboded, I once more lifted up my voice in earnest remonstrance; it was drowned by a loud gabble of indignation from all sides, and one person,—not a Toorkoman, I believe,—told me in Persian that there was no use in resisting; the thing must needs be, so I had better let them have their own way. "But I *can't* eat," said I; "not a morsel could I swallow." "Never mind that," said my friend; "if you can't, others can; you won't want help; many a one is gaping greedily for what seems to distress you so much." "Oh, very good," said I, mightily relieved;

"I understand; if such be the case, *Bismillah!* so I am not forced to choke myself, let others do as they please."

Meantime the delectable process proceeded, and right under our noses: the washing and the seething of the rice was all well enough, but when the whole cut-up limbs of the unfortunate animal, yet palpitating with life, were unceremoniously tumbled into the black caldron, the matter began to assume so truly cannibal and Polyphemus-like an appearance, that I cast about for the means of getting out of the way; and there were the three operators hurrying "about it, and about it," like Macbeth's witches, only that all was done in the very heat and eye of noon-day, instead of midnight, while we, surrounded by all the "rank and fashion" of the camp, beheld the abominable process from under a slight canopy scarcely eight feet distance from the spot. It was too much for human nature to support, so I contrived a method for avoiding for a while the stifling heat and immundicities of this august assembly. There was a fine though muddy stream running through the village, and I proposed to show the Toorkomans how to catch fish. I had rigged up a tolerably decent rod, together with a line and hooks, each separate article of which was a source of fresh amazement to this generation of semi-savages, and forth I fared to try my luck.

How transported would a Highland laird, of the olden time, have been with the *tail* I had on this occasion! All the "ragged and tough" of this ragged and tough encampment, were at my heels in a moment; man and boy, greybeard and child,

followed me like a stream, stopped when I stopped, and formed a crescent around me on the river's bank where I began to fish. Unfortunately, the fish were not animated by a like spirit of curiosity—or they, too, had already been stuffed with câtlemâh—or they were startled, perhaps, by the multitude of feet which beat the bank above them,—for bite they would not; and thus, unhappily, the zeal of my attendants was excited in vain: their curiosity remained unsatisfied, for we returned without a single fish, but with abundance of laugh, and noise, and uproar.

When we regained our tent, behold, the witches' labours had terminated; the feast was ready, and in another minute it smoked upon the floor in at least six huge wooden platters, near two feet in diameter each. A most unlovely show indeed it made to men who were already satisfied, and most savagely was it discussed. A looker on in the secret would have died of laughing had he watched the Meerza and myself coquetting with the great gobbets which they set before us with earnest and reiterated entreaties to devour and spare not; and the furtive looks we cast about to see how best we might evade this compulsive self-immolation, or exchanged with one another in rueful dilemma. But help was at hand. "Eat, eat, for Heaven's sake," whispered the Meerza to our guide, who had his huge hand in the same dish; "do help me off with some of this stuff." "Oh! is that it?" replied the guide; "no trouble at all;" and, suiting the action to the word, he clutched a prodigious handful smoking from the dish, and deposited it in the willing paws of a mon-

ster just behind him. Another mass filled another gaping pair of jaws; the bone followed; and, before you could well say, "La-illah-il-ullah!" the platter was cleaned. My dishfellow was less quick at discovering my distress, so that with me the coquetting process continued longer; but when he did comprehend what I would be at, then, hey presto! my platter was clear in a moment; a dozen dirty paws fell like harpies on its contents, and they vanished. Then did loaves of bread and dishes glance rapidly to and fro, and dirty arms were tossed on high, and "came and went, and came again, wild and disorderlie," until, in a space of time incredibly short, the whole *provant* was consumed, the bones picked, the platters licked, and the operators, all panting with exertion, stood staring around them for lack of work: then there was an eldrich laugh, as at a mighty feat; and then one of the company—a Seyed, bless the mark!—sat up upon his seat, and, assuming a serious air, intonated the *Fâteheh*, or first chapter of the Korân, namely, that of "Thanks;" each clause of which was repeated in chorus by the whole assembly in the same singing tone, every man holding out his open palms, and every cadence terminating in an "Ameen! Ameen!" after which the assembly broke up. I inquired whether this was the usual grace after meat; they said, No; but that such was always the custom after any unusual meal or feast, as they deemed this to be. It had a quaint and strange rather than a solemn effect; more like the

"Merry may we a' be!
Ill may we never see!" &c. &c.

which used to be sung on a Christmas night of old in Scotland, with hands all joined round the supper-table, than a real prayer.

All being concluded, our hosts requested us to remain their guests for the night; and, on our declining, and urging the necessity there was for our proceeding, the elder of them said, "Well, if you won't stay, what can I say more? A guide awaits you — may God be with you!" So we rewarded the witches for the contents of their caldron, made an additional present to the good woman of the house, and off we went to a third *obah*, our purposed resting place for the night, which was not more than six miles distant.

The first of the camps we had visited was inhabited by Goklans of the *Meerza Boyloo* tribe, who, being pressed by the Tekehs, had been brought by the Khan from a place called Chunder, lower down the Attruck, to be more under his wing. The second was an encampment of the same cluster; but the third, to which we proceeded down the river-side among natural meadows, though also Goklan, was an encampment of larger size of the Akjah-karnass tribe, the chief of which, Allee Khojah Beg, had served, and seen something of the world, and received us accordingly very cordially, with the same ceremonies, but less wildly performed. It had been a broiling ride, and we were right glad to get out of the sun under the fly of a tent, pitched for the purpose at the door of the Beg's *kannaut*, or wooden house. I never tasted anything more delicious than the first draught of cool butter-milk and water, which was instantly handed to us under its shade.

The chief understood a little Persian, so that I could communicate with him directly; he was also most hospitable and kind; and though disabled a little by lameness, bustled about most manfully to do us honour. In the course of half an hour, as we sat under our shade, we observed one of their wooden houses proceeding, as if self-moved, along the plain, from a distant cluster, and approaching to where we were. But as this singular phenomenon came nearer, we detected the twinkle of many feet beneath it, and discovered that it was our friend the Beg, who, with half a dozen people, was thus bringing an old house upon his shoulders for our private accommodation; and there they placed it, right in the middle of the plain, just as you would put a bell-glass over a plant—all tight and ready; and into it straight we walked, and found it a most comfortable concern. The black felt walls were lifted a little from the ground on all sides, to admit the soft breeze, and there we were at once pleasantly housed. In a few minutes more a second habitation made its appearance for my servants, who were not gentlemen to overlook their own comforts: the horses and mules were picketed between the two, and before the afternoon we were all at home with the honest old Beg, who laughed like a child at the various marvels which I displayed for his amusement. We cracked the prometheans—whisked the lucifers into light; and, to complete his delight, I shot two kites, that were hovering overhead, with my percussion gun, which to him had no visible means of producing fire. The whole camp were well disposed to deify me, and still more

to possess, if they could, the wonderful articles that were exhibited to them, but I put the Beg off with a knife and scissors, adding a coarse shawl and some trinkets for his wife; while he laid at my feet a suit of horse-clothing, such as the Toorkomans manufacture.

In the afternoon I walked once more to the river, but the fish and I did not understand each other; I lost a large fellow, the only one who came near me, and one or two hooks, and gave up; but I saw more of the camp, which consisted of full three hundred *kamauts*, or *alachiks*, (wooden houses,) and was pitched in a fine chummum, or natural meadow, a good way from the village which is connected with it, and which contains the fixed part of the tribe. There was far more appearance of order and decency than was observable in the other camps, and I saw many of the women employed in weaving those carpets which the Toorkomans make so well, and the process of which I now watched with interest.

In the evening we had another feast, which, though more private and on a less scale than that of the forenoon, was not much more refined. That for the mobility was separately served. My own cook had dressed some dishes, which were highly approved of and gobbled up with great *goût;* but the huge wooden platters also graced the board, and a fellow espying the head of an unhappy lamb in one of them made a snatch at it, and opening the skull at the neck part stuffed in a little salt, and turning the brains upside down with his finger, how clean I shall not say, just as one mixes an egg with

a spoon, scooped out the savoury mess with said finger, exactly as I have seen a little boy steal jam or honey out of a pot. After all was done, and the *Fâteheh* duly said, the well-greased cloth was removed; but so awkwardly, that sundry fragments fell upon the carpet on which we sat. The honest Beg, however, nowise disconcerted, immediately clawed off his rough hairy cap, which, using as both mop and brush, he soon removed the nuisance; after which he quietly replaced it on his head, as if nothing had happened.

After dinner we removed into the tent to hear a minstrel, who had been summoned to entertain us. He was blind, and performed with as much zeal and action as any blind scraper of catgut at home; and I wish I could remember some of the airs, the cadences of which were extremely good and very peculiar, as were also the choruses; but sleep weighed heavily upon our eyelids, and, at length, it was found expedient to dismiss our friend and retire to our own nest; so to sleep we went, weary of sight-seeing, but not of the sights.

14th July.—The first beams of the sun saw us merrily progressing down the Mônah valley, where we observed some fine villages, particularly that which gives its name to the place; and the ruins of several others, victims to the inveterate hostility of the Tekehs. Mônah in former times was populous and happy, but like the rest of this border country had gone utterly to decay, "clean into captivity," as the old woman said, in the full sense of the term, when Nejjeff Allee Khan, feeling the importance of this frontier outpost, partly forced and partly coaxed

a tribe or two of Göklan Toorkomans, who had been beaten from their old haunts, to settle here and join with the old Koordish inhabitants of the valley in a bond of mutual protection. Here, therefore, they are domesticated, as we saw, and have their summer and winter quarters, their *chummums*, or meadows, for flocks and herds, and a quiet life, in consideration of providing for the Khan's service a certain number of horsemen when required.

From Mônah, crossing over a high neck of land, we found ourselves in the fine broad valley of Semulghan, which touches upon Persian classic ground, for it was one of the haunts of the celebrated Roostum, and the scene of some of his superhuman feats and amours. It is besides remarkable for some natural beauties rare in Persia. The lofty mountain of Aladaugh, which commences behind Boojnoord, sends a lengthened chain down to a point behind Kalla Khan, a fort of Semulghan, on which is seen the first real forest we meet with on approaching Goorgaun. This spur, which shows a very rugged and picturesque crest of limestone, is most beautifully varied with green meadow forest and cultivation, which creeps up to the very top. Above rises the still wilder and equally well-wooded ridge of Yamundaugh, and these are lost in the huge sharp tooth of Q'oorq'ood, the loftiest and most rugged mountain in this part of the country. It is destitute of forest timber, but, like others near it, is more or less thickly sprinkled with tufts of *arbor vitæ*, thorns; barberry bushes, and a sort of dwarf maple. Kalla Khan, situated on an artificial mound, and backed by these noble mountains, ruinous as it is, still forms

an object worthy of notice, and I could not refrain from making a sketch of it in memory of old times; for from here it was that in my former journey we started to tempt the perils of the most dangerous part of all my route.

On our way hither, as we passed through a village named Mahomedabad to take up a guide, who, with a party of horsemen, was appointed by the Khan to see us to Gourgaun, a young fellow, little more than a boy, entered the place, and sat down with the usual salutation of peace. But it appeared in the sequel that his intentions were anything but pacific; for after talking a while in Koordish, which I did not understand, he grew warm, and so did our guide, Mahomed Baukher Beg, and at last they came to blows. Who struck first I do not know, but the little fellow fought manfully till hurried out of the way by the bystanders, after a vain attempt to draw first his sword and then his knife. The abuse on either side was choice—that is, what I understood of it, and it was some time before order was restored. But the cause of the squabble was the most curious part of it. The lad was a native of Deregez, that is, of a village originally from thence, but now planted close by that in which we then were, and he had a countryman, though no relation, who had entered the service of Mahomed Baukher Beg. This he conceived to be a degradation, why, we could not exactly learn, but it was one to which he had determined not to submit, and he came professedly resolved to force his countryman and *elder* from the service he had taken, and from the very village of his master. "Just think of the young fellow's

madness!" continued Mahomed Baukher Beg, as he finished this account:—"and now I would not say but that his fellow-villagers will make an attempt to intercept us, for they are all as crack-brained as he, and they would betake themselves to *toffung* and *shumsheer*, and, perhaps, have a man or two killed; but I shall disappoint them—there is no use in a row; we will go by a roundabout way." There assuredly was more of discretion than of valour in this resolve, but as I had no great desire for fighting myself, I followed his lead, which proved to be a very bad one, for it took us through morasses and among water-courses so fatiguing to the horses, that I grumbled many a malediction both upon the impertinent little wretch who had led us this dance, and on his over-prudent antagonist. We heard nothing of the Deregezees, however, and arrived in safety at Kalla Khan of Semulghan, where formerly I had been the guest of Beder Khan, then a young man in the prime of life—now a broken old one, residing at Boojnoord.

Beyond this place the danger of travelling is so great, that no one ever attempts to cross the country to Goorgaun without a strong guard; and our friend, Nejjeff Allee Khan, had provided for our safety by directing his Naib, or lieutenant, here, to give us an escort of thirty horsemen and twenty *toffunchees*, or matchlockmen. But such orders are generally more for show than use in Persia: the Naib told us that though with some difficulty he might be able to make up great part of the horsemen, he could not command a single toffunchee. It was the harvest time, he said, and not a man would stir. That it was harvest time was

plain enough to us as we came along. At every village mountains of shocks ready for treading out were piled near the gates, and bullocks and horses were everywhere at work on the threshing floor. In the steady climate of Persia, where a shower out of season is a thing almost unheard of, the harvest does not cost half the trouble that is taken about it with us. Once fit for cutting the grain gets as dry as possible—the men (never women) cut it, bind it into sheaves, which are either piled up at once in the field, and there trodden out, or are carried on the backs of cows, or asses, to the village, and thrown on the house-tops, or made into a heap somewhere, till it can conveniently be threshed out. No fear of heating; both grain and straw are so dry that the former is at once fit for the mill.

At this welcome labour were all the men employed, so that, in spite of the remonstrances of Mahomed Baukher Beg, our guard assembled slowly and reluctantly. Provisions were less grudgingly supplied, and our baggage was seriously increased in weight by the quantity of grain which prudence forced us to lay in for our two following desert journeys, of which I shall tell you in my next.

LETTER XIII.

Leave Kalla Khan.—Escort.—Breakfast.—Dreary ride.—Bivouac at Kallah Kahistan.—Superstitions.—A Braggadocio.—Derreh-e-Kelatha.—Kalbash Valley.—Toorkoman traces.—Old acquaintances.—Descent into Gourgaun.—Obah of Mahomed Wullee Beg.—Breakfast.—Toorkoman burials.—Obah of Mahomed Khojah Khan.—Plains of Gurgaun.—Obah of Hyder Khan.—Striking a Toorkoman camp.—Toorkoman wives.—Division of labour.—Female costume.—Brides and marriage customs.—Female morals.—Appearance.—Commutation of blood-money.—Government.—Sirdârs.—Ak Sakals.—Obah of Khallee Khan.—Arrive at Senger.

15th JULY.—We were on foot by dawn, but the want of men and the fiddling preparations of those we had, detained us till six o'clock, when, attended by above thirty horsemen, with a few miserable toffunchees, we pricked gallantly over the plain and along the skirts of the huge Q'oorq'ood. But a few years ago, and no one could cross even the narrow strip of cultivation which lies between the Kalla and the skirts of this mountain without an even chance of being caught by a Tartar: but of later years they have become less bold, as the chance of success diminished with the diminishing population, and a better look-out was kept; and for some time past no labourer had been made captive so close. But the late inroads had excited fresh alarm, and our guards, as we advanced, galloped about prying into every cleft and hollow, and peering over every height

to ascertain the safety of the ground before proceeding. When we had advanced in this manner about four miles, the Naib, who had accompanied us so far, drew off with his own guard, not certainly the worst appointed of the party, and took his leave. We were left with only twenty horsemen besides our own people, and four people on foot, whom, proving more a hindrance than a help, we dismissed also.

About ten o'clock we came to a sweet little glen that wound upwards into the very heart of the stony mountains, and in which ran a clear brawling brook, bordered with willows and fine walnut trees. This had been the site of a fine village belonging to the Gereilees, a powerful Turkish tribe that had come in with Timour. But the Gereilees had fallen from their high estate, and the village had been destroyed more than fifty years before by the Toorkomans, and there lay the ruins looking sad and dreary on a little height above the stream. The place was called *Zurd*, and must have been a considerable one in its day; for on an opposite height there were four or five buildings, constructed of stone, and lime, and brick, which seemed to be tombs of great men, perhaps Seyeds or Imaumzadehs, the saints of the village. Each had vaults underground, but whether meant as receptacles for the dead, or for the living in the great heats, I cannot tell. A stone wall had once enclosed the whole.

Here we breakfasted under the shade of a fine walnut, while our horses grazed by the side of the stream. But prudence forbade a long indulgence, so on we went again, leaving the more level ground on our right, and holding straight forward among a

cluster of smaller and rocky hills which defended the approaches of Q'oorq'ood as outworks do a mighty citadel. It was a hot, dreary, weary ride, among crags and hollows, spotted only with the dark *arbor vitæ* and thorns, exhibiting little of either dignity or beauty. The only advantage this line of route possessed, as our guide told us, was security; that he promised us; and certainly I think no Toorkoman would dream of seeking for travellers in the wilderness where we wandered this day. Road there generally was none, nor was there a symptom of living inhabitant except the deer which we frequently startled; or the wild hogs, the routings of whose noses we observed in the soft places; or the tigers and leopards, whose traces we came now and then across, and who, no doubt, looked upon said deer and hogs as their own peculiar property.

At length we opened out a fine long broad valley, the name of which is Insha, and which we knew to be inhabited, partially at least, by our friends the Goklans. But to approach so near the semi-civilized part of the country, and, by consequence, to the haunts of the Toorkomans, was utterly inconsistent with safety, and so our guide turned sharp up a steep and savage-looking glen that led into the very heart of Q'oorq'ood, the highest peak of which was seen just overhanging it. After a desperate scramble for half an hour over rocks and brush-covered precipices, down at length we plunged into a ravine, for all the world like to our own R—g, and down the face of a rock not much less perpendicular, by a little goat-track which wound among huge blocks of stone to the bottom. There ran a stream as clear as

crystal, and large enough to turn half a dozen mills; a little river in a hollow, which seemed shut out by lofty rocks from all the world. Immediately above us, a rocky promontory crowned with a ruined castle jutted into the ravine. Its position reminded me of Castle Campbell in the Ochil hills, but the mountains in the back ground were infinitely finer. This was the castle of Kahistàn, another old seat of the Gereilees; the stream was the water of Insha, near its source, and here was our resting-place for the night.

And, undoubtedly, it was a resting-place, both singular and secure enough in all conscience; not a trace of the hand or foot of man was anywhere to be seen, for though fragments of walls denoted that a large village had once existed immediately above the castle, the whole valley, as well as the rocky promontory, was overgrown with a prodigious growth of grass, and weeds, and brambles, scorched into perfect dryness by the intense heat of the sun, and the foot of horse and man was rendered insecure by the holes and ruins thus concealed by the dry herbage. It was a spot obviously never visited, and therefore afforded nothing for our wants, but wood and water for ourselves and grass for our cattle. This, however, was all we required, so dismounting and unbitting our horses, we all took to making ourselves snug for the night. Sentinels were placed on the heights to guard against surprise, and with our arms beside us, we commenced a very pleasant bivouac. Our journey of to-day has been about twenty-eight miles.

I was amused this evening with a trait of Persian

superstition. The place of our bivouac was shaded by a number of fine trees, and particularly walnut trees: when it grew dark I got my carpet and coverlit laid under one of the latter, which had sheltered me all the afternoon, and was preparing to lay myself to rest, when Mahomed Baukher Beg besought me to remove. "No man in his senses," said he, "sleeps under a walnut tree: it is certain death."—"How so?" inquired I.—"Why, he is sure to be smitten by the Gins," replied he.—"By the Gins!" repeated I, "and here have we been sitting for hours under this very tree without harm—how comes that?"—"Ah! you were awake," said he, "and the waking eye of man scares away all evil spirits—they dare not approach it; but the moment it closes in sleep, they take their revenge, and the man they catch under a walnut tree asleep, will never leave it in health; if he be not crushed on the spot, he will be smitten with some severe malady which will put an end to him in a few days." I laughed, and reminded him I *had* been sleeping under the dangerous tree during the afternoon; but the poor man was so earnest, that, knowing how superstitious these tribes are, I did not like to offend their prejudices, as, had anything unfortunate occurred during the march, it would assuredly have been attributed to my obstinacy; so I left my comfortable berth for a more open spot, where I passed the night. In preparing this, the guide was particularly active; he removed my slippers, which had been deposited near my pillow, to a place near the foot of my bed-clothes, telling me it was unlucky to have the foot gear placed near the head, and disposing of my arms in what he considered to be the

best and readiest manner in case of need, he took his leave and retired.

I found that this notion about the danger of sleeping under a walnut tree is common in Persia. There is a story of some sage having once declared to a certain king, that whoever should eat barley-bread with *màs* (sour milk) of a cow, and having so eaten, should sleep under a walnut tree, would certainly be Gin-struck. That a fakeer offered to try the experiment, and did so without suffering any evil consequences. On this, the king taunted the sage as a false prophet, and said that he by rights should be the victim instead. "Well," replied the *sheikh*, or sage, "if your majesty will consent to let the experiment, as proposed by me, be tried by the prince, your eldest-born son, and heir to your throne, I am content to lose my head should he escape; but if any accident befall him, let it be remembered that *I* am free from all blame." The king, it is said, agreed, the prince complied, and next morning was found dead: since when, the charm has been thoroughly credited, and no one in Persia sleeps under a walnut tree.

By this time, however, I had discovered that my good guide was not only absurdly superstitious, but a most lying and unblushing braggadocio. His stories this night of his own exploits were extravagant even among Persian boastings. On one occasion he had put fifty horsemen to flight by his single arm. On another, out of seventeen horsemen he had brought home six horses and seven heads, single handed. His blows were like those of Roostun, his aim unerring, his sagacity unfailing, and he summed

up the amount of his own merits by declaring that when the Toorkomans discovered the hoof-prints of his horse, they quailed and retreated; and that the name of Mahomed Baukher Beg was a watchword among them with which mothers would still their babes. He did not condescend to inform us *how* his horse's foot-prints were distinguishable from those of any other animal; but talked on with a vein of self-satisfied and imposing gravity, which, had it not been so gross as to excite contempt and disgust, would have been irresistibly ludicrous. I regretted it, for the man really knew the country, and much interesting matter might have been picked out of him had one known how far to trust him: but no sooner did you encourage him by a single question, than off he went full tilt, digressing to some feat of his own or of Roostun's; indeed, he seemed scarcely to distinguish the one from the other, for he jumbled his own actions with those of the great Persian hero in such a manner that no one could tell which was which.

Next morning, the 16th, having no preparations to detain us, we left our mountain nest by a glorious dawn, but not without a memorial of our presence; for some of the people, having crossed the stream, had carelessly set the grass on fire, and during the whole night we had been treated with the most splendid illumination. When we departed, the whole mountain opposite to us was burning; and as we looked back during our march, we still saw the smoke ascending into the pure azure of heaven till lost in distance. Our path still carried us high among the mountains, over rocky and barren ground sprinkled

with dwarf maple, thorn, and barberry bushes; till sweeping round a lofty brow, we saw beneath us a long valley proceeding from the western end of Q'oorq'ood. This was called the *Derreh-e-kelâthâ*, or Valley of the Forts, from a cluster of small forts that once existed here. This we reached by a sharp and rough descent, which brought us to the bed of a small stream at the foot of the mountain.

We had now reached the most hazardous point of our journey, as along, or rather across, this valley lies the track of those Toorkomans who plunder Jahjerm, Meyomeed, Abbassabad, and the rest of that country, and there are few days in the year in which it is entirely free of marauders. We breakfasted quietly by the water side; and after having refreshed our horses, our guide told us to mount again, adding, "Now let every man who has a musket carry it primed and cocked in his hand, and let those who have matches light them, for no man can tell out of what hole or bush his enemy may start." All this sounded very business-like, as did the orders for *caraŵuls*, or videttes, to gallop out in front, and rear, and flanks; but for my part I could see no such immediate or pressing danger, in daylight, upon a wide plain where nothing bigger than a cock-pheasant could well have lain concealed, and I thought it savoured somewhat of the braggadocio fussiness I had remarked in the Beg's character; but I unslung my "Purdey," looked at its caps, and did as others did, so

"On we fared,
Each silent — each upon his guard."

Our way lay at first down a rocky hollow by the

banks of the stream, named *Baud-bure*, from a severe wind which is said to blow here, and which led us into a lower part of the plain, named the *Kalbash* valley, separated from that of Armootlee only by a low ridge, the tail of Q'oorq'ood: this last plain stretches almost uninterruptedly to Jahjerm and Bostam, and thus penetrates the very centre of Persia towards Cashan and Ispahan. In crossing the Kalbash, we found numerous pathways which the people recognised as those of Toorkoman plunderers; on many of them the hoof-prints were fresh, but we saw none of the horses that had made them. The frequent foot-tramps of the wild ass, too, where they had assembled upon some soft height, and beat and pawed the ground, might have misled men less experienced than my guards; and it was very interesting to watch their sagacity, sharpened by constant practice like that of the American Indians, in detecting and pronouncing on the various *trails* (Persice *Redd*) which presented themselves to our notice during the whole of this anxious forenoon. How freshly did it call to my remembrance the day, twelve years before, when I made nearly the same journey from and to the same point, but on a parallel course; and you may conceive how much I was interested at discovering among my present guards some of my old companions on that occasion. You may remember my mentioning in my first travels a chase after a wild hog in the plain of Armootlee, in which one of my guards killed the animal by a kick of his horse, just as it was getting away from us all; well, this very man was now with us, and was delighted when I mentioned the circum-

stance to some of the others, as a feat which I had admired on that occasion. He rode up, and gazed earnestly at me; shook his head at observing the grizzled hue of my beard,—his own was of the same colour,—and abusing himself for a beast for not recollecting me, swore that, as an old companion, his life was at my service. Several of the other guards then recognized me, so that I had special service enough for the rest of the journey. It was a pleasant occurrence in so remote a spot; and I made inquiries for more than one old acquaintance. Alas! death, or the Toorkomans, had accounted for most of them. I put my friend in mind of an elderly man who rode a splendid chestnut horse, which he had refused to sell because he was the same on whose back his only son had been speared but a few weeks before, in a chuppow. The horse was gone — that was no wonder; and the man had gone to join his son much in the same way — that was no marvel either: life, everywhere precarious, is here continually staked in a game where the odds are all against it.

We had a weary work threading our way through this valley, which opened at some distance into that of the Insha, and from that into the wider strath of the Attruck; and our fatigue was increased by the alarm or ignorance of our guide, who, in courting concealment and security, lost his way. On nearing the mouth of the valley, and seeing, or pretending that he saw, some suspicious objects, he consulted for a while with the leaders, and the result was that we retraced our steps, and got entangled among some broken ground and hillocks, and lost much

time : in vain, as it appeared, for we were all wrong, and had once more to try back, and descend into the body of the valley. The guards themselves now began to turn their leader into ridicule, and one of them swore we had "all turned *Mamamlees* — a tribe whose life is passed in going first round the *tuppeh*, and then back again." The matter terminated in a very long and wearisome tramp up hill and down dale, till we came to another long valley opening on the Attruck, at the top of which was a wide tract of rich ripe corn, belonging, it appeared, to our old friends the Goklans. The rising grounds were sprinkled with fine forest trees, and some noble wooded peaks, lifting their heads above the bounding heights of the valley, gave token of what we were approaching. This was the point of safety, and nearly the resting place, after our labours, for the night.

A more splendid sheet of wheat and barley than now met our eyes no Lothian farmer could wish to see; but it would have moved both his spleen and his envy to observe the style of agriculture, and the small pains which the production of this noble crop had cost. Scarcely had the rich soil been scratched by a crooked stick, and yet the return to the sower, for his scanty sprinkling of seed, could not be less than from forty to sixty fold, and no trouble in irrigation—the moisture from Mazunderân, close by, did the business of itself. But we were too desirous of rest for our weary horses and ourselves, after thirteen hours of a burning sun in the saddle, to speculate much upon Goklan farming, so we pushed on to the gap where commenced the descent that

was to carry us to our halting-place; and there, indeed, we stood fixed, in spite of ourselves, in admiration of the splendid prospect which one moment opened to our view.

The brown and arid hills over which we had been toiling, the waving sheet of corn, with its few sprinkled trees, had vanished, as if by the touch of an enchanter's wand, and a scene of the most majestic and varied woodland appeared instead. Rich green grass sprang up under foot, forests of primeval size and denseness clothed the loftier heights, whilst groves and coppice, and groups of the happiest form and position, interspersed with fields and glades, and patches of rich pasture, clothed the lower slopes in a garb of loveliness which there is no describing. It was a park of nature's own cunning handiwork, on the most magnificent scale, a park such as no nobleman on earth can boast of possessing—such oaks, such limes, such elms, such sycamores! What would your "lords and dukes, and noble princes," have given but for a specimen of them? It was a sight to put even old Windsor to shame, with all its ancestral magnificence — for where at Windsor are the tall aspiring mountains, clothed in the same gigantic forests that adorn its waving slopes and glades? But it is impossible to convey the smallest notion of the grandeur of the scene, or of its effect upon us; it was the change—the change from utter barrenness and desolation to inexpressible fertility and richness that was so striking, and which, perhaps, can in no place on earth be so strongly and suddenly exhibited.

We stood, as it were, upon a ridge: looking over

one shoulder we saw the grim brown rocks and grey plains we had passed through, stretching out in cheerless and colourless solitude to the misty Attock; turning to the other all was smiling loveliness—the display of varied rural beauty I have so inadequately sketched. No wonder that even the Meerza, provokingly apathetic as he generally seemed, was here struck with amazement, and stared about, as if he had got into a new world, in uncontrollable delight. As for our hungry horses, they had their share of enjoyment on the sweet grass—there was no getting them along—no wrenching up their heads from the juicy herbage and verdant turf, which was spreading a feast for them under their feet.

While gazing and progressing alternately, and threading our way among the natural groves and cultivation, which formed a sort of pretty patchwork around, we were attracted by a shrill cry and the sight of two or three men scampering off. "Aha!" exclaimed one of the horsemen, "they are frightened — they have seen us, and take us for the Yamoot plunderers — hark! they are calling us *Yaghee*." And sure enough the word Yaghee (or rebellious) did resound from bank to brae, and we discovered on the heights above us a number of persons, men and women, on horseback as well as on foot, all making off as fast as they could. One or two of our people now pushed forwards, roaring out words of reassurance to the fugitives; but it was exceedingly difficult to get them to halt, and still more so to persuade them that we were not enemies. At length, observing the loaded cattle,

they took a little courage, and waited till our guide went up and explained our business; upon which a most ragged-looking rapscallion came forward and expressed his regret at not being able to receive us here, but said that if we would only go on about half a fursung further to the tents of his brother, we should have the "best entertainment possible for man and horse." This raggamuffin was the brother of Mahomed Wullee Beg, the chief for whose tents we were bound, and, accordingly, without further delay we took our way towards them.

This way lay through as dense a forest as the woods of South America themselves could produce, and down as steep a descent as any Persian *Cothul* need display; and it was a weary while before we issued from the wood upon a green glade in the glen below. Fortunately the path was dry—as had it been wet and muddy, I know not how the wearied beasts would have stood it out. From hence we threaded a succession of splendid scenery, which sometimes reminded me of Europe, and at other times, from its luxuriant vegetation, of the West Indies; but I do not think it was so exquisitely lovely as I remembered it formerly at another pass, where the wild fruit-trees were more abundant and all in one sheet of blossom; but it was deep and dense, and darkly green and rich. After a longer space than at the late hour we should have desired, several clusters of the wooden houses greeted our sight, still some distance below us; and in a short while we were seated under a shade or canopy, made with boughs, before the tent, or rather alachick, of Mahomed Wullee Beg.

This chief, a strange, ragged, and tough-looking personage, received us with that mixture of shyness and frankness which, I think, marks the alteration that has been taking place in Toorkoman character. It seemed to say, "I know I ought to press my hospitality upon you, and to feel the desire of making all possible sacrifices for my guest, but I can't for the life of me do so; and truth to say, I am half afraid of you—half sorry you have come—what am I like to get out of you?" Down we sat, however, among a most thief-like crew, who had come to welcome, that is, to stare at us; and while some straw and grain were preparing for our horses, we took a hearty drink of butter-milk and water, and tried to have patience until something more substantial should be prepared for us. But they were so long of getting even a lamb to be slain for us, that the night would have been well nigh spent ere it could have been cooked; so I contented myself with a little bread and tea, with an egg, and soon stretched my limbs on the numuds that were spread for us in plenty. Our poor horses fared worse—they had only straw to eat, instead of grass, which, having tasted the latter, did not please them at all, so they remained empty and hungry.

After a night rendered almost totally sleepless by the howling of fierce dogs, the fighting and neighing of horses, the roaring of men and women, with the screaming of a poor infant suffering under inflammation of the eyes, by way of interlude, I willingly left my bed, as the soft dewy morning broke, and sallied forth to view the site of the encampment; and, certainly, never did a tribe of savages

fall upon a lovelier spot. The glen, in itself a beautiful thing, at this point opened out a little, and, joined by another which furrows the same mountain, formed a little basin of rich land, which was one sheet of cultivation, mingled with trees and enclosures. Above, the well-wooded hills retired gradually, almost into the very clouds, exposing in many places great seams and ridges of white and red rock, to contrast with the rich green foliage. On gazing at this pleasant prospect, there was something about it which, I scarce could say why, suggested to my mind the idea rather of an African or West Indian settlement, than a village in any part of Central Asia — certainly it was most unlike to Persia. It was, perhaps, the luxuriance, rather than the nature of the foliage, that gave rise to this illusion; and yet the mantling vines, the broad leaf of the maize, the palma-christi, and the cotton plant, unquestionably strengthened the impression that we had some how or other got between the tropics.

Taking a slight sketch of this fascinating scene, with its singular mixture of savage and domestic nature, I returned to breakfast at the Obah; and, doubtless, long will the Obah remember that breakfast. A few boiled eggs being prepared, my servant handed me a spoon to eat them with, a sight that excited much amazement. Being desirous rather than otherwise of making an impression, I called for a knife and fork to aid me in discussing some rare tough goat mutton that made its appearance next. This completed their astonishment. In less than a minute the shed was surrounded, as well as filled,

and, at least, one hundred and fifty persons assembled to see the *Feringee* (Frank) eat. Their shouts of applause were quite outrageous, and even the chief could not suppress the laughter forced from him by his delight. Then came the customary examination of arms and accoutrements, and next the no less customary interchange of trifling presents. After which we left our host and his *obah* to take a burning ride down the glen, which landed us in the plains of Gourgaun, and at the large *obah* of Mahomed Khojah Khan.

While waiting, after breakfast, for the loading of our baggage, I was startled by a loud sound of female lamentation — of women uttering passionate cries; and on looking out, I observed two elderly females, almost naked, with their black hair all loose about their ears, and beating their breats, run by with frantic gestures. They were followed by six or eight others, who sought to restrain their excess of emotion, and to bring them back, as it seemed, to the house they had quitted. These women, as I learned, had lost a brother; the body had just been carried from the tent for interment, and the poor creatures followed the custom of their people, and, no doubt, the feelings of their own heart, in thus expressing their grief. I asked where the body had been carried to —where they buried their dead. I was told that it must be taken to a distance of nearly fifty miles, to the original burying place of the tribe upon the banks of the Attruck, a journey which would require two or three days, and through a country now overrun with their enemies. "And if they are caught

by these enemies in the performance of this pious duty?" inquired I. "They will be put to death every one of them," was the reply. This is paying a high regard to old customs indeed!

I had observed round the *obah*, and indeed in every open space and on every prominent point, heaps of earth or stones, with poles or a tall stone stuck upright in the centre, much as in our old cairns. From former inquiry I was aware that these were memorials of the dead, but being desirous to learn further particulars, I now renewed my questions. I was informed that these were not burial places, nor even the spots where a body has been washed, as I formerly understood, but monuments strictly in memory of the dead. A Goklan dies, his body is washed; the earth where this process has been performed is gathered, and, together with some scrap of his old apparel, is buried in a conspicuous place near one of the usual stations of the *obah* to which he belonged. But the body is carried to the ancient burying ground of the tribe, which generally is near the grave of some holy man, the former spiritual guide or prophet of the *obah*, and whose reliques are supposed to hallow the spot: Necessity of some sort may have compelled succeeding generations to abandon the haunts of their forefathers; but they still are regarded as the only meet resting places for the dead; and surely there is something touching in the thought of these rude wanderers still turning at the last to the homes of their fathers, and braving every danger to lay their dead where their progenitors repose, and where they also look one day to rest in peace.

The Toorkómans are indeed scrupulously particular regarding the disposal of their dead. If a man be killed in a plundering expedition, they invari 'ly carry back the body to the *obah*, where it is regarded as that of a martyr. They do not wash the blood from it, for the lustre of martyrdom hallows all those stains from which another corse would require to be cleansed; such immundicities indeed are supposed to impart a peculiar savour of sanctity, and the honoured corse is committed to the sacred earth without effacing one trace of those honourable wounds which have secured to the soul the unquestioned right of instant admission into Paradise.

Little worth relating passed at the *obah* of Mahomed Khojeh Khan. It was the same routine of question and reply, of display and astonishment: my pyrotechnicks produced the usual applause, as did the murder of two poor kites on the wing with the detonating gun. The Khan was an honest fellow, who, after witnessing my wonders, swore an eternal friendship, declared that we were brothers; and sure enough we wanted nothing which he could give us. We came to anchor in one of the comfortable round houses, which was brought "all standing," as before, for our accommodation, and there was the same gross feasting as in the *obahs* of Mônah. On the following morning, the 18th, my host brought me a horse as a present; but I found that no offence would be taken if I went through the formality of accepting him, and then *re*-presenting him to his master, retaining only the clothing,

as a memorial of friendship; and this course I adopted, requiting the horse-cloth with a fully more valuable donation.

A ride of three hours along the open plains of Goorgaun, brought us to the *obah* of Hyder Khan, chief of the Qurruck, or principal tribe of Goklans. These plains, which in spring and early summer are covered with herbage in which a horse goes girth-deep, were now burned up and bare from heat, and our horses had to put up with dry stubble instead of green pasture. On the east rose the hills we had descended, all wooded and furrowed with numberless hollows and ravines. On the north a long visionary range ran out towards the Caspian Sea, and in the south arose the dim gigantic mountains of Mazunderan and Asterabad. Numerous clusters of the Toorkoman tents dotted the plain with their snug shapes, and the cattle of their inmates, sparsedly scattered over it, looked like grains of black powder on the yellow surface. All was level as a polished mirror, the Turkish name actually given to one part of it; but the rivers of Goorgaun and Sarasoo, with many other smaller streams, have ploughed its rich alluvial soil into deep and broad ravines, in the bottom of which, as on plains of a lower level, the waters have their channels.

As we approached the tents of Hyder Khan, an old woman, holding in her hand a pan of live coals, came forth and threw them down beneath my horse's feet. I learned upon inquiry that it is a superstitious compliment paid to those to whom they desire to show respect, and which amounts to a prayer that, while dwelling in their tents, you may be free

from the influence of the evil eye. The ceremony cost me a present, of course: the trait of national manners was worth it all. The Khan, it seems, was not at home when we reached camp, but the ladies of his household did the honours perfectly; especially his two wives, the last married being a fine, tall, good-looking woman, who, though in the family way, worked like a very horse. For this lady we learned that the Khan had given a large sum of money, and she seemed resolved that he should not repent his bargain.

While breakfast was preparing the Khan himself came home; a coarse, fat, ungainly, sulky sort of personage he was, apparently so much taken up with his own greatness, that he scarcely would condescend to welcome his guests. But he, like the rest, was surprised out of his grimness by the sight of my arms and rarities, which my guide took care to call on me to produce, and he was pleased to smile at some little presents which I made to a very pretty boy of his, whom the mother brought to me in her arms, no doubt with some hopes of the sort.

At length the day became intolerably sultry; the wind roared hot and furious, bringing with it clouds of dust; the crowd of gazers slunk one by one away, and left us to repose; the Khan retired into his tent just behind where we lay, and there we saw him, like a great hog, lying upon his wife's knees (the whole front of the tent being open), while she, with perfect and unceremonious simplicity, relieved his under garments from the superabundance of vermin which had collected there; a moderate quantity being rather affected, as exciting a pleasing degree of

titillation. It was a most unlovely, though a thoroughly characteristic exhibition.

In the evening, on my return from bathing in the river and an ineffectual attempt at fishing, we were treated with the sight of striking a Toorkoman camp. The station of the *obah* having become both bare and dirty overmuch, the Khan had resolved to move to another spot some two or three miles further down the river. Some of the tents had already been struck, and on approaching the Khan's quarters, there were his wives, with two or three other females, all working hard at taking the houses to pieces, packing up the frames in neat bundles, and stowing all the goods and chattels of the family into their various *joals*, or cases, ready to be loaded on the camels. Not a man put his hand to anything; the women did all, and it was wonderful to see the quiet yet active neatness with which the poor creatures went through this hard work, while their lazy lords and masters lay stretched on numuds, smoking before their doors. As for the Khan's wife, unless it were to have the harder work to do, I saw no privilege that she enjoyed. By daybreak in the morning I observed the same lady working energetically at churning milk in a huge skin before the site of the tent she had herself packed up the preceding evening, and half an hour later she was loading sundry camels with the property of the family. This all sounds and seems extremely wrong; but such is the division of labour among these tribes. Everything connected with domestic matters, such, for instance, as the work I have alluded to, and all that belongs to the flocks and herds and their produce, is in the

female department. The labour of cultivation falls to the share of the men. They plough, sow, and irrigate; they watch the ground, construct the water-courses, and reap the crop. In these occupations you never see a woman employed. Thus the labour of the men is only periodical, while that of the women is incessant.

In the morning early the whole milk from flocks and herds is brought and thrown into a huge pot to be boiled, along with a portion of sour milk to turn it; when a little cold and coagulated, it is poured into the skin of some animal, sewed up so as to form a bag, and then being suspended from a triangle of poles at the door of each tent, one of the women, with a stick armed at the end, beats and works at it until the butter comes to the top. This butter is never well tasted;—how could it be so under such a system?—indeed, as the milk of sheep, goats, and cows is all mingled together, it cannot but be a heterogeneous mass. It is white, sour, tallowy, and has little taste beside, save that of smoke. They melt or boil it to get rid of the remaining whey and impurities, and, pouring it into skins, it is kept like the *ghee* of India for sale or family use. The buttermilk, however, is the article in more general use. This being separated from the butter is also kept in skins, (the only receptacle they possess for storing liquids,) and is drunk mingled with water at all meals. It is presented to every guest as he arrives, and is, in fact, a very agreeable acid beverage. Such portion as is not used while fresh is thrown into a coarse woollen bag, from which the whey runs off, and the mass thus become solid

is either dried for winter use, or kept for other occasions, and in either case retains its peculiar qualities, becoming, when mixed with water, the acid buttermilky drink called in Persian *áb-e-doogh*. *Más*, again called *Yagourt* in Turkey, is milk curdled in the same way, but set to cool without separating the butter from it, and forms a principal article of food, not only among the wandering tribes, but among all classes of the population of these countries.

You may be curious to know how these hard-working ladies dress. Nothing can be simpler than the costume either of men or women. The latter consists of an ample shift, which covers them from neck to heel, open from the throat to the bottom of the bosom, but capable of being buttoned up there also. It is usually made of red or blue and red striped silk, or silk and cotton, according to the means or fancy of the wearer; some of the poorer class wear it of blue or white cotton. The sleeves are long and wide, and some gird it around the loins and lower part of the stomach with a strip of white cloth or coarse shawl. To have a good shawl for this purpose is a point of great ambition with the Toorkoman women; others, that is those, I presume, who possess no such girdle, wear the chemise loose flowing about them. Beneath they wear a pair of drawers of the same stuff, silk, or cotton or of both, and sometimes a very pretty striped silk manufacture called Aleejah. These drawers are much narrower at the ankles than those of the Persian women, and indeed so low does the shift come that they are but little seen. In cold weather they add to this cloth-

ing a wide open wrapping gown called a jubba, like that of the men, generally made of silk and cotton stuff, and sometimes quilted, besides which sheepskin cloaks or jackets are used. On the head they throw a sort of scarf, which binds the brow, and hangs behind, not ungracefully, the ends being stuck in the girdle. It conceals the hair, which is plaited and adorned with silver ornaments, and coins, and stones, and shells. These scarfs are of various colours, but yellow I think seems most preferred. Over this scarf they tie a white fillet, which confines the other to the head, and over the mouth and chin they tie a red and white cotton cloth or handkerchief, which is hooked behind by silver clasps, like the *Roobunds* of the Persian ladies.

Such is the catalogue of their usual clothing; but the most curious part of their personal equipment is what they call their *yirák*, or *harness;* and indeed it more resembles harness than female ornamental gear. It consists first, among the rich, of a heavy cincture of silver scales, or linked joints, elaborately sculptured, disposed upon a leathern strap, and fastened by a handsome clasp to match. This girdle, which is about three inches broad, supports a massy plate of silver, round, oval, or heart-shaped, cut sometimes *au jour* into figures, sometimes solid, but always ornamented with chasing or carving, and stones, as cornelians, agates, turquoises, or with flowers ingilt. This, which is really a gorgeous barbaric ornament, but fitter for a horse than a woman, hangs down behind. The clasp is equally rich, and from it depends in front a corresponding article, but often varying in shape and in device.

Heavy silver armlets, bracelets, and anklets, with earrings, and various nondescript articles, in the same taste, according to the means of the wearer, complete the personal equipment of a Toorkoman lady in the jewellery department, who thus has no trifling weight to carry.

When a bride, her head-dress is of a most gorgeous, though nondescript character. It consists of an enormous castellated-looking structure, formed of a cane framework, covered with red silk, and ornamented with all manner of coins, and stones, and shells, which rises from the head to a height of from fifteen to eighteen inches, expanding gradually in breadth to the front. The young girls wear rather a graceful cap, ornamented with feathers like a Peruvian Princess, and it is pretty to see them coming and going from the water-side carrying their water-skins, and clothed in this gay apparel. The children are dressed much like the women, but on the head is put a neat Tartar-looking cap of silk or chintz, which is adorned with the same sort of silver ornaments, and crowned with a kind of bell-shaped turret in which a feather may be stuck. They also dress their favourites in small jubbas, or robes, like their father's, of silk stuffs, and load the little creatures with weighty silver harness like that of their mother's.

But the most singular customs of these people relate to marriage. The Toorkomans do not shut up their women; and there being no such restraint on the social intercourse between the sexes as in most Mussulmaun countries, love-matches are common. A youth becomes acquainted with a girl; they are mutually attached, and agree to marry. But the young man does not dare to breathe his

wishes to the parents of his beloved, for such is not etiquette, and would be resented as an insult. What then does he do? He elopes with the girl, and carries her to some neighbouring *obah*, where, such is the custom, there is no doubt of a kind reception; and there the young people live as man and wife for some six weeks, when the Reish-suffeeds, or elders of the protecting *obah*, deem it time to talk over the matter with the parents. Accordingly, they represent the wishes of the young couple, and, joined by the elders of the father's *obah*, endeavour to reconcile him to the union, promising, on the part of the bridegroom, a handsome *bashlogue*, or price, for his wife. In due time the consent is given; on which the bride returns to her father's house, where, strange to say, she is retained for six months or a year, and sometimes two years, according, as it appears, to her caprice or the parents' will, having no communication with her husband, unless by stealth. The meaning of this strange separation I never could ascertain. People said that it was allowed to the bride as time to prepare her outfit; but this they admitted was not the true cause. It seems to be a period of freedom given to her by custom, previous to her resigning her liberty for ever, and lapsing into the slavish condition of a Toorkoman's wife; and they do not scruple to affirm that it is made use of by these young ladies for the worst and most abandoned purposes. Afterwards, the marriage presents and price of the wife are interchanged, and she goes finally to live with her husband.

The accounts I gathered of the morals of the Goklan women, even among their own *obahs*, were

anything but favourable to their characters. Among the Yamoots and Tekehs, they say, particularly among the latter, it is a shade better; but delicacy, or even strict virtue, appears to be unknown and unappreciated. A lapse on the part of a young woman is not attended with much degradation, as it is generally repaired by marriage. A similar error on the part of a wife, if detected in such a manner as to lead to public exposure, is punished by death; but unless thus publicly forced upon the husband's observation, he generally pockets the wrong, and says nothing about it: a Toorkoman wife is too valuable an animal to have her head cut off for every breath of scandal. In fact, it is the work of a wife, more than anything else, that a Toorkoman looks to when he marries, unless when he is a rich man, and marries for connexion; and it is this which gives rise to the singular fact, that they will pay more for a widow than a maiden wife. The widow is presumed to have learned her trade —the girl has not; and if the widow possess a character for activity and strength, her value is sometimes enormous, and the competition for her very high. Hyder Khan is said to have given a sum equal to 200*l.* for his last and favourite wife, who was a widow; but she belonged to a family of powerful connexions, a union with which increased greatly his patriarchal influence in the tribe. I have heard the same thing told of soldiers in barracks; a widow of any capabilities, be she as ugly as sin, need never remain a widow longer than she likes. In justice to the Toorkoman ladies, I should mention that I have heard other and more favour-

able accounts of their conduct than those I gathered in this expedition among their own *obahs*. Allee Asker Khan, of Meyomeed, denied that they could justly be charged with incontinence more than those of other tribes; there were good and bad, he said, of all. He denied that light conduct in a girl before marriage would be easily overlooked, and affirmed that an undue intimacy between young people of opposite sexes is not a common occurrence; and that, if discovered, the parties would run the risk of being put to death. He gave the same account of their marriage customs, however, as I heard here, and his testimony confirmed the strange and unaccountable custom of the separation which takes place between a bride and bridegroom for a year or more, after six weeks' cohabitation at first.

Matches are also made occasionally by the parents themselves, with or without the intervention of the Reish-suffeeds; but the order and ceremonies of the nuptials are the same. There is a regular contract and a stipulated price; the young people are permitted to enjoy each other's society for a month or six weeks; and the bride then returns, as in the former case, to spend a year or more with her parents.

Of the looks of the women I have to remark, that many of the girls I saw were beautiful, having delicate features, fine skins, and healthy though yellow complexions. Of the married women few had retained their good looks, and the old women were absolutely frightful, both in form and feature. Perhaps the Goklans may owe a portion of their comparative comeliness and want of Tartarian fea-

tures to their greater vicinity and intercourse with the Kuzzilbashes; but I have been told that the Tekeh girls are also very pretty, and the intermingling of blood in their case must be greatly less.*

It is not uncommon among the Goklans, and I believe, too, among the other tribes, to commute the price of blood, in case of a murder, for a girl and her portion, paid by the family of the offender to that of the injured. This price varies greatly. Among the Tekehs it is so low as four slaves; that is captives, Kuzzilbashes, or others. Among the Yamoots and Goklans it is more, from one to two thousand *tillas*—that is, from 100*l.* to 200*l.* sterling being sometimes paid.

The government of these tribes is, as you know, entirely patriarchal. There is no hereditary nobility; every one conceives himself on an equality with the rest, except with those whose superior age and wisdom have won them a peculiar respect. Those only are regarded as chiefs who have shown themselves worthy of being followed, or who have accumulated great riches, and those only are looked up to as *ak-sakâls*, or elders, whose wisdom has

* It is a common occurrence among the Toorkomans, as in other Eastern countries, to have children by their female slaves; but such offspring are regarded rather as slaves than children, and are termed *Do-reg*—that is, of two bloods, (veins,) or bastards. In fact, so much more valuable are slaves than children, that most Toorkomans prefer the former to the latter; insomuch, that it is not uncommon, when a slave-girl proves pregnant by her master, to marry her to a slave, on purpose that the offspring may be imputed to the last connexion, and so pass as the slave instead of the child of her master.

gained them the confidence of the tribe, and whose numerous descendants and connexions give them a powerful influence in the *obah*. This sort of patriarchal influence is one great object of every rich Toorkoman's ambition; and I have mentioned it as one motive for the high price which Hyder Khan gave for his wife. As for the sirdârs, or leaders, their influence also arises from their individual merits. A young fellow, pricked by ambition or the desire of plunder, proclaims a chappow, or plundering party. He ties a flag to his spear, sticks it in the ground before his tent, pickets his horse, all prepared on one side, and sits ready accoutred on the other, and calls for volunteers to join his purposed expedition. This being the customary preliminary attracts attention, and some one soon comes forward to inquire about it, and asks who is to be the *bellat*, or guide; the aspirant answers, "Me!" Then come the questions of, "What do you know about the country?" "Who knows you as a leader?" "What claims have you to our confidence?" If these inquiries are answered in a satisfactory manner, he is sure to muster a party, according to the prospects of success. If these are realized, and a handsome booty obtained, he at once gains a name, which if he is fortunate enough to maintain by an exhibition of prudence and gallantry, he can at all times be sure of commanding a strong party for a chuppow, and thus becomes a *sirdâr*, or leader, a title only to be won by valour and merit. Such sirdârs, when old, become *ak-sakâls*, or elders, (white beards literally,) and counsellors of the tribe.

But we have lingered long enough in the *obah*

of Hyder Khan, which is now moving off. Let us proceed on our journey. Next morning, the 19th, after the customary exchange of tokens, we each went our way. Our regular stage that day should have been Pisseruc, one of my former halting places; but having heard that my old host, Khallee Khan Goklan, with whom I had spent a day of yore, was encamped not far from our road, I resolved to pay him the compliment of a visit; and the rather, as I heard he had fallen into the yellow leaf of favour as well as of years, he having been heavily visited by the Prince of Asterabad, as it was said, for his adherence to the interests of the late Abbas Meerza, and of his son, Mahomed Meerza.

Khallee Khan recognized and received me like an old friend, welcomed me heartily, and caused the women to bake the rich câtlemah for breakfast. I found, however, that oppression, far from opening his heart, appeared to have made it more grasping, for such a race of sturdy beggars as his family were I have not often met with. Everything we had was the object not only of their desire, but of their solicitation. The shawl I wore round my waist, and that of the Meerza, were *begged* for by the sons, mothers, and wives; and the Khan himself, among many sad complaints about the poverty he was reduced to, gave numerous hints that the smallest donation would be thankfully accepted. Disposed as I was to be friendly, I was so much disgusted by this conduct, that I gave less than I had intended, and resisted all entreaty to remain for the night; in fact, after what I had both seen

and heard, I scarcely knew whether to regard myself as safe in the camp.

It is true that the *Saheb Ikhtiár*, as he is called, Buddehâzemân Meerza, who is governor of Asterabad, has been extremely severe upon the Toorkoman Eeliauts, and some say not without reason, for they are a truculent and rebellious race, who require a strong hand. But it is nevertheless likewise true, that the Prince has resorted to the meanest and dirtiest tricks to extract from them what he can. Thus, if he hears of a good horse, a promising colt, a fine greyhound or pointer, he finds means of picking a quarrel with the owner, whom he persecutes till the coveted animal is surrendered as the price of reconciliation and renewed favour. The finest horse I saw among the Goklans was one belonging to Hyder Khan, who was so frightened lest the Prince should get wind of its value, that he *fired* its two fore legs as if the horse had broken down, satisfied that with such a blemish the Prince would never think of him. In the same way Khallee Khan besought me to purchase of him one of two fine colts he was secretly rearing, in order, as he said, to provide for his own necessities, and to get the beast out of the Prince's way.

I was amused at the care they took of these colts. The flies at Gourgaun were at this time particularly troublesome, as my poor cattle could testify; they almost kill the horses that are exposed to their attacks, so they clothe their favourites; and I saw one little crea ture, ofbut two months old, clad in a complete suit of coarse cotton cloth; little trousers he had on his drumstick legs both in front and rear, "with a hole behind for his tail to go through," and

a jacket and covering for its little *abdomen*, and all; it looked for all the world like a dancing-dog dressed, or a monkey tricked out to perform the "sailor's hornpipe."

Perhaps it would be difficult in the whole range of Asiatic scenery to find a sweeter spot than that in which the camp of Khallee Khan was pitched, situated as it is in a fine well-watered plain at the foot of a range of noble hills, and opening out to the whole extent of mountain, plain, and woodland that stretch toward Asterabad. Among the finest of these is the *Neel-e-koh*, a grand wooded mass, celebrated in Persian story as one of the abodes of the Mazunderan giants, who were at length subdued by Roostum. Nothing could exceed the loveliness of this scene as we approached it all fresh and dewy with the first light of morning; but the haze became too powerful by noon, and the heat so great that there was no starting till late: as for the flies, they were like the plague of Egypt—they permitted neither man nor beast to rest. We were glad when the approach of evening permitted us to move, when, guided by the Khan's son, we made our way across a very intricate piece of country, so intersected by water-courses for irrigating the rice grounds, that, as a welcome to Asterabad, we almost lost some of our cattle in crossing them. The sun had set ere we reached our abode for the night, but our way lay through the noblest possible groves of ancient oaks, and among rich meadows, lighted by a moon worthy to embellish such scenery; and about ten o'clock at night we arrived at Senger, a village, or rather a great straggling collection of houses, dropt as it were

at random in a gorge, at some distance from the plain. Here we were most politely received by Meerza Saad Oollah Khan, a nobleman who had lately been appointed governor of the district, and *Darogha*, or chief of the Toorkoman tribes in this quarter; and in due time we sat down to an excellent and plentiful supper, with the addition of what was no mean luxury in so broiling a climate, namely, iced sherbet, and lumps of fine clear ice, *ad libitum*, to cool our boiling stomachs.

LETTER XIV.

Yamoots.—Obstacles.—Evil reports.—Nô-deh.—Exalted sleeping-place. — Coormallee stream and pass.—Thelavah.—Kerghaun. —Bad servants.—Tricks upon travellers.—Taush.—Yeilâks.—Shahkoh.—Chardeh.—Chushmah Allee.—Poolad Muhuleh.—A resolution.—Asserân.—A midnight march.—Pass.—Feerozekoh. — Baughshah. — Reach Tehran. — Disappointment. — Illness.

It was our wish to proceed upon the morrow, with all possible expedition, towards Asterabad, where I had some business, and meant to repose for a few days. But, "God disposes," though "man proposes." We met here with an obstacle which we had by no means anticipated. It appeared that a large proportion of the Yamoot tribe of Toorkomans, who had occupied the districts of Asterabad near the Caspian Sea, and the lower banks of the rivers Attruck and Gorgaun, whether in consequence of increased exactions on the part of their rulers, or from a natural disposition to turbulence, or both causes combined, had of late thrown off the yoke of the *Saheb-Ikhteár*, and declared themselves rebels both by word and deed. The tribe, thus divided, had taken possession of the two sides of the Attruck; those still professing obedience remaining on the south, while the rebels occupied its northern bank. But the fact is, that neither portion was at all to be trusted, for the division even descended to families; and whenever a murder or a robbery was committed,

and traced to a certain house, the reply was sure to be—"It may be so; our father, or brothers, or uncles are with the rebels on the other side; they doubtless may have committed this act, which we regret, but know nothing off—we are innocent." Thus, as in all cases of border outrage, the perpetrators of crime escape with impunity, and are encouraged in the continuance of practices which a feeble government is unable to check. There are, however, always two sides to a story, and probably the Yamoots, if questioned on the subject, would make out a good case of provocation to account for their conduct. The following circumstance, which came to my knowledge from good authority, leads me to suspect they had no small cause of complaint against their Persian rulers. Khojah Verdee Khan, one of their most gallant chiefs, had brought his contingent of men, and was in regular attendance upon the person of the Prince Royal in Khorasan. But it appears that some of his countrymen were not so loyal, for tidings of chuppows upon the Persian districts reached the ears of the Prince, who sending for the Khan upbraided him severely; making use of very hard words. The independent spirit of the Yamoot was roused; he asserted his own innocence, denied being responsible for the misdeeds of others, and complained bitterly of the abuse which had been heaped upon him. "How," said he, "can your Highness expect to be served with zeal if this is the reward of fidelity?"

The Prince appears either to have been in a bad humour, or to have entertained some grudge at the Khan, for he continued taunting him so bitterly, that in high indignation he said, "Prince, you use

me as if you meant to drive me also to *chuppowing*." "How is that, *Ghorumsaug*?" said the Prince in wrath; "what do you dare to tell me? Begone!—instantly quit my presence!" The Khan did so immediately, and striking his tents, went with his followers to encamp at a little distance. The Prince's jeloodar was sent to negotiate with him, with the apparent object of bringing him to terms, but probably only to detain him for a convenient space, for it was known that a *chupper* of his Royal Highness left camp and rode in haste towards the desert. The Khan, after three days' detention, took his way homeward, and having arrived within a short distance of his camp, was pushing on with four or five attendants, when at night-fall he was met and challenged by a large party. From their drawing up on either side of the way the Khan suspected mischief, so desiring his people to stand to their arms, he demanded of the strangers what they wanted. "Are you Khojah Verdee Khan?" was their reply to his question. The Khan unslung his bow, for he never carried a gun, contenting himself with the arms of his country, and having fitted an arrow, he replied, "I am Khojah Verdee Khan: and now what do you want with me?" The immediate discharge of half a dozen muskets was the only reply, which too plainly told their errand. The Khan, wounded, fell from his horse, but recovering himself, managed, though they closed around him, to dive under his horse and get to his spear, with which he defended himself so fiercely for a while, that no one could touch him; but loss of blood overcame him; he sank at

length upon the ground, and they instantly cut his throat in cold blood.

The ravages of these Yamoot rebels had of late, in particular, become so atrocious as almost entirely to put a stop to travelling. Whole villages at the foot of the hills, and on their skirts, have been destroyed, so that the road from Asterabad to Gourgaun, a strip of country which, when I passed through it before, was populous and prosperous, was now become a wilderness. Not a day passed without a visit from these plunderers, who in parties, varying from five to two hundred, would issue from their haunts to beset the highways and village by-paths. The Goklans, when caught by them, were always put to death upon the spot; the Persians they carried off as slaves for sale at Khyvah; but as resistance was sometimes attempted, murders were frequent. The road from Senger to Asterabad leads through a dense jungle, with much intricate ground, all of which is so completely suited to ambuscades and surprises that no precaution is sufficient to ensure safety; for while a part of your guard might be looking out in advance and another bringing up the rear behind, you might yourself be pounced upon and carried off by the sudden assault of half a dozen ruffians in flank, without its being possible to receive assistance; nay, there are instances of individuals of the guard themselves being thus spirited away while employed in escorting others.

Only the day before our arrival at the village, four men had been found murdered on the road; and prisoners had been made within the week at the

very gates of Asterabad. Of all these circumstances Meerza Saad-oolla Khan now informed me, and added, that however desirous he might be of promoting my views, and honouring the introductions I had brought, it would not be in his power to ensure my safety by the route of Asterabad, and he therefore besought me to give up thoughts of proceeding by that place. "I would send one hundred toffunchees with you to the limits of my jurisdiction," said he, "were I satisfied that such a measure would suffice; but I am not, and even if I were, there is a tract intervening between that limit and Asterabad, where I know you could obtain no guard. Be advised by me then,—take the road by the mountains. It will carry you two days' journey round, it is true, but it is safe and sure. I will give you guides and every necessary, and you may start to-morrow morning."

To this there could be no reply, as we were not prepared for a visit to Kyvah, or even for the thrust of a Yamoot spear; but it was mighty provoking. Here we were within two days' journey of Asterabad, and our horses, more than ourselves, required rest; yet we saw ourselves forced to take a route which would lead us over some of the worst ground and most rugged mountains of Persia, and occupy us five days instead of two. We were also not a little struck by the apparent inhospitality of so readily sending us away without even the option of a day's rest. But this was afterwards explained. It appeared that a report of the King's death had come from Tehran, a piece of news which had set the restless Eeliauts into such a ferment, that the Khan expected immediate commotions, and wanted no strangers

to embarrass his movements. We found, too, that the pestilent boaster and busy-body, our guide, had been one of those who picked up and propagated this false report; and though Meerza Saad-oollah had reprimanded him for this indiscretion, and sought to tranquillize us by an assurance that he did not believe the report himself, as, if true, his brother would surely have sent him immediate information, it could not fail to weigh with me, and sharpen the desire I felt to reach a place where the truth might be ascertained.

Accordingly next day, the 20th, after a due examination of our cattle, and particularly of the state of their feet, we started from Senger, attended by a guard of fifty mounted toffunchees, for Nodeh, a village only twelve miles distant, retired within the hills, beyond the reach, as was understood, of Yamoot depredation: even in this short space we came upon tracks of about fifteen of the ruffians, but our party was too imposing for attack, and we escaped unmolested. To speak of the scenery on our road would be but to repeat the descriptions I have attempted ever since I introduced you to Gourgaun. Noble woods of primeval oaks shading carpets of verdure enamelled with flowers; open glades of still richer pasture, and green banks exquisitely interspersed with coppice and groups of the most magnificent limes, or elms, or sycamores; sweet streams, over-arched with high trees, and fountains ever cool, even in the intense heat we were suffering under; Paradise itself could not exhibit more various beauty —it was reserved for man to profane it with violence and strife.

Nodeh was situated on the bank of a small river among lofty rocks crowned with wood, in the gorge of a glen that penetrated into the heart of the mountains. Like all the Mazunderan villages, it was buried in wood, chiefly mulberry trees, so that it was difficult to see more than one or two houses at a time. The moisture of the climate forces the inhabitants to resort to various expedients for preserving themselves from its effects, and one of these is that of sleeping upon stages raised high above the ground upon posts. On one of these were our quarters for the night; and the croaking of frogs, and the grinding and chirping of crickets, with the thousand insects we heard and saw crawling about, reminded me strongly of the West Indies. I cannot believe the place to be healthy, and the wan looks of my host's family, though one of the prettiest I have seen, confirmed me in this opinion. The young lads were remarkably well looking, and several of the daughters, all of whom were unveiled, were delicately beautiful.

Next morning (the 21st) we were on foot by dawn, and commenced our journey up the bed of the river Coormallee, which exhibited every possible variety of that species of close scenery; alders of enormous size shut out the light of day from the stream, and we had continually to cross and recross it, to the no small distress of our baggage cattle, as the bed was extremely rough, and the stones very slippery. This, notwithstanding, is one of the great thoroughfares for caravans from the upper country to Gourgaun and Asterabad when the road is safe; but at every step the decay, and not the increase, of pro-

sperity and population meets the eye. We passed the site of a village named Shutoor Serai, a large place in the days of Nadir, when this glen was well peopled; but no vestige of it remains except the burying-ground, through the tombs of which the road winds, and trees of from sixty to eighty years' growth had sprung up from the very graves, mocking, as it were, the mouldered dust with their green and lusty strength. Man goes to his long home and decays, and is at rest, but nature never stands still; her works rise and flourish in uninterrupted succession over the relics of frail humanity.

A little further on we passed a shrine, the tomb of some departed saint, which possesses the quality, assuredly an invaluable one in this moist region, of curing the rheumatism. The prescription is to sleep in it a night with *faith* and to let blood; and if this be observed, its efficacy is complete, they assert, even at the present day. Tracing up the stream to its forks, we gradually, yet rapidly arose, exhausting its volume of waters as we passed the mouths of the subsidiary glens, and left behind us the dense forests of Asterabad and Mazunderan; the mountains became rocky and more scantily clothed with bushes of oak and thorn instead of mighty trees, until we at length returned to our dry old acquaintances, the *arbor vitæ*, maple, and barberry bushes. About half past two we reached Thelavah, a village in a hollow, surrounded by bare lofty hills, and forming in all respects a most perfect contrast to our last night's lodging-place; for while the people of Nodeh were in all things ready and obliging, at this place we could get neither assistance nor lodgings, and scarcely

enough of food for ourselves and our cattle, even on the most exorbitant terms,—all the result of distance from control—of irresponsibility: we were nominally guests, but so unwelcome, that they starved us; and we were forced, as usual, to purchase necessaries in the teeth of our *mehmandar*, who was unable or unwilling to procure us what we wanted otherwise. To add to our disagreeables, we found all our cattle getting lame from the rough roads; nor was it pleasant to find, on comparing my bearings with the map, that we had just marched so much out of our direct route.

This truth became more apparent on the succeeding march (on the 22nd), which led us by a weary and uninteresting route over some high hills and a long, barren, undulating plain, thirty-four miles to Kerghaun, a village not more than five miles distant from Bostam. My old friend the Koh-Meyomeid was visible from this plain only about forty miles distant: you may remember my weary ascent to its summit on my way to Mushed. It was not agreeable to recognise all these features of a country we hoped we had done with; but there was no help for it. The next march was to have taken us direct to Asterabad, but circumstances occurred which changed my views and the course of our journey.

Early in the progress of this journey, I had perceived that my servants were far from respectable or trustworthy: their object was not my comfort or interest; nor did they look to the rewards of honest service, but to pillage and profit—unfair profit. Aware of this, I endeavoured to check the system of plunder, and was aided in this to a certain degree by the co-

operation of my companion the Meerza; but the servants were aware of their advantage on a long and hazardous journey, and appeared inclined to use it; those who were less thievish were more insolent, so that several times I had half resolved to turn them about their business, and trust to chance for replacing them; but, encumbered as I was, with a dozen of animals, how could I take such a risk! The hard work from Boojnoord completed, probably, the disgust which disappointment of their schemes of pillage had first created, and they began to speak of me among themselves, and even in the Meerza's hearing, in terms which not only were in the highest degree disrespectful, but seemed to imply a resolution to compensate themselves at all hazards, one way or other, for their imaginary wrongs. The Meerza told me this, which only confirmed my own observations, and opened my eyes fully to the truth. He explained to me that his suspicions had been roused from the first, and that in order to try their correctness he had feigned to enter into their schemes to rob me, and the result was, that not one was honest. He advised me to take into my own keeping several valuable articles, as one of the plots was to pretend that they had been lost, trust to my indulgence for forgiveness, and then sell them and divide the money. Some instances of intended villany were this day communicated to me, and confirmed by a person in company, quite unconnected with them, and who, perhaps, not seeing any hope of sharing in the profit, thought it useless to conceal what had come to his knowledge.

Now, though I shrewdly suspected some part of

this, and was satisfied that one of the men, at least, was up to any degree of rascality, yet the proof of it all coming upon me in so overwhelming a manner, and at a time when, from the state of my cattle, I required the best assistance of all my people,—the conviction that in so remote a spot, so far from assistance of any kind, I was in the hands of a band of robbers, who, if they dared, would cut my throat for the clothes I possessed,—you will scarcely be surprised, created a strong anxiety to reach a place of safety with all possible speed.

The King might die—the whole country might be in a ferment, and then, where was I?—My horses were nearly worn out by hard work, heat, flies, insufficient food, and bad attendance. If I were to follow up my first intention and go to Asterabad, it would not only be moving further from my resources, and committing myself more to the power of my dangerous servants, but placing myself in the power of the *Saheb Ikhtiar*, who being inimical to Mahomed Meerza, the heir-apparent, and knowing the friendship of the English for that Prince, might, in case of his Majesty's death, think fit to detain me from joining my countrymen till the result of the expected struggle for the throne should be past. All these considerations I rapidly weighed against the motives there were to lead me to Asterabad, and the result was that all my objects would be best attained by repairing to the capital with the utmost possible speed; so thither I resolved, accordingly, to bend my way. There was another consideration that confirmed my resolution—Asterabad was at this particular season extremely unhealthy—

so much so, that all its inhabitants, who could, had left it for their *yeilâks*, or summer quarters; so that I should not, in all probability, have met with those who alone were qualified to yield me the information I sought.

No sooner had I taken this resolution, and prepared to pursue the road to Tehran, than there occurred a singular confirmation of one part of my suspicions, in the detection of an attempt to dispose of one of my guns to a notorious thief who had come to our encamping ground, and who was caught with it under his arm. My jeloodar, who had the charge of it, endeavoured very awkwardly to explain the suspicious circumstance, and declared that his accidental acquaintance with this fellow had been the means of saving some part of our baggage. The man, he said, belonged to a gang of thieves, who had watched us for several days, in hopes of being able to purloin something; but having now become a guest of my servants, he felt it would be a breach of honour to attack us—so he not only forswore the attempt himself, but put us on our guard against his associates. I need not say how this story was received, or that its only effect was to make me redouble all precautions, and leave as little property as possible in the power either of my servants or the thieves.

23d July.—This morning, thank Heaven, we got rid of our gasconading, important, and impertinent guide, Mahomed Baukher Beg, who had accompanied us thus far, not, as he would have had us believe, for our own exclusive convenience, but because he was going on business of his own to the camp of

the Saheb Ikhtiâr. According to his own account he was hand and glove with half the princes of the blood, and all the ministers, and on the best terms with the old Shah himself, who, he declared, whenever he approached the presence, used to salute him and welcome him by the honourable title of "*Peerahun-e-tun-e-Shah*, which being interpreted means "the shirt of the King's own body," meaning thereby the most confidential and nearest of his Majesty's "gardes du corps." During the whole way he was endeavouring to impress me with notions, not only of his great importance, but disinterested independence; he even threatened remotely to present me with the horse he rode, a gallant Toorkoman, worth ten of its master any day. But that went off, and when I presented him with what I considered a handsome donation for his trouble, I discovered that he was utterly disappointed. My friend, Shah Verdee Beg, the hog-killer, was more reasonable, and we parted excellent friends.

Just as we were preparing to start, we had a specimen of Persian tricks upon travellers. We required a guide to Tehran, and had entered into negotiations with a man, Khoda Verdee, who had joined us on the way to Kerghaun, an honest fellow as he seemed, and who professed himself our humble slave. Having declared that he sought no better than to follow us for love, we conceived that for moderate wages and his food he would be glad to guide us to Tehran, whither he seemed desirous to go. And at last, after much work, he did agree to go with us for three tomauns, and a present contingent on good behaviour; on our also consenting

to take into our employment his brother, as a muleteer, instead of our own, who had misbehaved. All seemed right; the man went, as he said, to get his horse ready, and we were talking of dismissing our old muleteer, when, suddenly, the scene changed. We were told that there was outside a gholaum of the Prince, who demanded to know who we were, and whether we had his Highness's permission to depart, as, failing that, he could not permit us to leave the place.

To this piece of insolent absurdity we at first sent a contemptuous reply; but fearing some trick, we desired the fellow to be brought, and gave him his defiance by word of mouth. We now discovered that Khoda Verdee was also a gholaum, and his comrade probably thought, that by teasing or frightening us, if we should turn out to be raw travellers, he might make something out of the business. In this he failed, of course; but whether his influence on our proposed guide was stronger than that of our promises, or that the man repented of his bargain, I know not, but he, from this time, only communicated with us by shuffling messages, and finally disappeared at the very moment we were about to start; and we should have been put to great inconvenience had not another man stepped forth and proffered to guide us to Taush, our next stage. I had little doubt that the whole affair originated with our rascally servants, who wished to detain us for another night where we were—no doubt for their own good purposes.

It required the whole day at Kerghaun to rest and repair damages; and our disappointment of a guide

detained us so late, after every thing else was ready, that it was past eleven at night before we mounted by the light of a brilliant moon. We travelled all night, upon our guard, to Taush, through a valley and broken ground of little interest in itself, but in sight of a fine wild rocky range of mountains called Topâl. The village itself is small, the situation high and cold, and everything was exorbitantly dear. Our lodging was in a mosque, and for dinner we had kebaubs of a noble mountain sheep, killed by a hunter that morning. Both these and other game, including tigers and leopards, are said to abound in the hills around.

25th July.—Just as we were starting at dawn, a gholaum of the *Saheb-Ikhtiár* rode up, with the compliments of that Prince, who, having heard of my being on the way to Asterabad, had sent this man to attend me through his government; and the gholaum, hearing that I was in reality proceeding towards the capital, insisted on escorting me to the next *munzil* at Chardeh. I should mention here, in order to give you some conception of the country we were traversing, that the great range of mountains which I have designated as the Elburz, and which stretch along the whole north of Persia, are curiously broken in numerous points of their extent, being sometimes divided longitudinally by fine large valleys, and sometimes transversely by deep hollows and ravines, or regions of a depressed level. Between these lower regions, groups of peaks and rugged masses shoot up, occasionally to a great height, and it is among these that the finest and coolest yeilâks, or summer quarters, are to be found.

We had now approached Shah-koh, which is one of those clusters to which the Prince of Asterabad retires in summer; and had consequently to cross some very lofty and difficult passes, in one of which is the village of Shah-koh itself, probably one of the highest fixed abodes of man in Persia. On inquiring at Taush respecting our road to the next stage, we found great difficulty in ascertaining correctly which was the best of several that branched off from the village. This difficulty did not proceed from ill-will, but from sheer ignorance, which prevails to an astonishing extent in many of these remote places, even with regard to their neighbours in the next glen—so it was well we had the gholaum with us. Singularly wild was the scenery through which our way led us this day, and steep and weary were the cothuls, and long the valleys, in which fine cultivation was mingled with tracts that were altogether barren.

When we reached the glen of Shah-koh, the castellated village of which towers high above the hollow on a hill to the left, we observed the chief, Aga Meerza Allee himself, who had been warned of our approach, coming down from his hills with a prodigious *tail*, a welcome, and a capital breakfast. This last, which consisted of a lamb roasted whole, with eggs, butter, mâs; &c. &c. we discussed with much *goût* by a well of the most deliciously cold water in a little meadow, which feasted our horses also; and thus revived we thanked our kind host, and rode on. The country became still wilder, and the scenery still more striking, all around us. On one side were the lofty wooded mountains of Asterabad divided

into sombre glens and mysterious hollows, with some of their peaks still streaked with snow; on the other rose the arid rocky ridges which form the more southern portions of the range — lofty, sharp, and fantastic, bare of wood except where spotted with the *arbor vitæ* trees, but in many points exhibiting gigantic proportions both of height and hollow. The pass, which at length took us down into the Chardeh valley, was one of the sharpest and dreariest I ever remember; and the lofty crags that rose around us, though half shrouded in mist, were savage and terrific as imagination could well picture. The stage, though only thirty-six miles, occupied us fourteen hours of incessant toil; and happy we were when at length we found ourselves at night-fall sitting under a group of fine willows before the door of a mosque in the thriving village of Chardeh.

This village, it seems, is held free of taxes by a firmaun of the King, on condition of furnishing three hundred men to the Daûrghan regiment, and the inhabitants, in consequence of this immunity, are all very rich. I wish I could say that this prosperity had liberalized their dispositions, but the fact is that more arrant churls and extortioners I never met with. Everything we required was charged at a price beyond all bounds; but to remonstrate was in vain; nothing was to be had without money in hand, and money I was accordingly forced to tell down at no allowance. In addition to this the necessity of watching the *deviltries* (as old Hawk-eye would call them) of my rascally servants occupied me most disagreeably. I had tolerable proof that some of the horses and mules did not come fairly by their

lameness, and I began to think that there was a combination against my ever reaching the capital. I was therefore right glad when I found myself once more in motion, although it was noon of the 26th before we broke ground.

Our march was only sixteen miles, along a valley, to *Chushmah-e-Allee*, or the fountain of Allee, a source which I have alluded to in my former travels as one regarding which the story goes, that if any unclean thing be thrown therein, it sends forth a wind so violent as sometimes to destroy the crops and the country round. This, however, turns out not to be the exact fact; that is, the story as told at a distance differs from what we hear on the spot, as often happens. The sensitive fountain is at some distance from Chushmah-e-Allee, and it appears that only certain sorts of impurities, and these thrown in by a certain class of persons, have the power of exciting so violently the wrath of its protecting *numen;* nor could I learn that any living being had actually witnessed the miracle. The Chushmah-e-Allee, on the other hand, is a very quiet and innocent, but most splendid rush of water, which, bursting from under a bed of sandstone and gravel, does nothing but fertilize the district through which it flows. It gushes forth at once a little river, and as, like most such remarkable sources, its origin has been attributed to a miracle, it has become a place of pilgrimage, and his present Majesty has thought fit to surround it with a wall, and has had the space thus inclosed planted with trees: he has also built a sort of palace, and otherwise improved the natural capabilities of the place so much that it is a delightful

spot to halt at. The gush of water, clear as crystal, is received first in a square basin, perhaps thirty paces by twenty, from which it rushes in two swift streams under the palace or summer-house into another reservoir, about one hundred yards long, surrounded by tall poplars and other trees. But the noble sycamores which overshadow the upper basin are the pride of the place, drooping as they do over it till their leaves actually float upon the surface of the bright water. It was under the largest of these, round the root of which a platform has been built, that we took up our quarters for the night; and we should have been most comfortable, but for the great distance of the village from whence we derived our supplies; for the poor Seyed who keeps the garden has nothing to give or to sell, enjoying only from his Majesty the liberal donation of *the half* of eight tomauns a year, the other half devolving on a comrade.

These reservoirs are full of fish, chiefly of the leather-mouthed sort, common throughout the country, and some of which here have attained an immense size. They are preserved from religious motives, and are so tame that they will feed almost from the hand. We would not of course offend the prejudices of the people by killing any of them; but the Meerza was so wild at the sight of their numbers that he insisted on having one cast with my line. He instantly hooked and drew out a thumping fellow, which, having satisfied our curiosity by examining, I threw back into the water again.

27th July.—Starting a little after five A.M., we made a march of thirty-six miles, through long,

barren, uninteresting valleys, to Poolad Muhuleh, a populous and thriving village, but the people of which partake in the churlish nature of most of the inhabitants of this quarter. We had no lodging, but bivouacked in a field, having our horses and cattle picketed close to us, and with difficulty procuring either forage for them or a guide to take us on to the next stage. Here two of my mules, which had for a long time been lame, gave up entirely; and the rest of my cattle, from hard work and indifferent treatment, were all more or less knocked up. But this only increased that anxiety to get to Tehran, which had also been excited by another circumstance. On our way to Poolad Muhuleh we met two of the Shah's gholaums going to Bostâm, to make Ismael Meerza surrender a *flute* belonging to Mahomed Meerza, which that prince had thought fit to pilfer or detain. It proved, at all events, the favour which his majesty evinced towards his future successor; but to me they communicated a more interesting piece of news, namely, that the English mission was still, as they assured me, at Tehran.

This set me a thinking;—why should I linger on the way, when a day might make the difference of catching my countrymen at Tehran or not? And the result was a determination to push forward for the capital at once;—to accompany my people only to the next stage, and after resting there three hours, to proceed with one servant and my best horses, without halting, to Tehran. There would all my damages best be refitted, and a kind welcome from my countrymen would soon salve all sores. The distance was but one hundred and seventy miles, and this I hoped

to make in little more than two days; so that, while saving much in time myself, I should be in condition to send out help for my disabled party.

On the 28th of July, after much trouble and detention, we left our lame mule in care of the ketkhodah of the village, and hiring a guide, with much ado, together with a pony to carry corn for us, proceeded on our journey. The road to Asseram, from thirty-six to forty miles, was universally hilly, and had one or two very steep ascents and descents; but I pushed on to our resting place, in order that my horses might have three or four hours rest before commencing their long march. There was some magnificent scenery on the way, and the lofty peak of the Koh-e-aurân, towering from out a sea of mist over one of the finest passes into Mazunderan, all black and dismal as the pit of Acheron, was singularly striking.

It was near nine in the evening before matters were so arranged that I could start, myself and jeloodar riding my best horses, with one lad, a groom, upon a stout yaboo. It was pitch dark, and the only guide I could procure would accompany us but a short way; he assured us, however, that the road was excellent, and that we could not miss it, as by keeping *always* to the right hand, we should never go wrong. This did not prove to be quite the case, as you shall hear; for the road, after becoming very rough and uneven for some miles, led us into a very intricate succession of heights and hollows which fairly puzzled us. At last it distinctly branched into two. "Which shall I take?" asked the jeloodar. "The right, of course,"

replied I; and on we went, though the sudden rise made by the path, when we could see it, created some suspicion in our minds. Our guide, however, had warned us of a *slight* ascent. Now, as this is a term that varies according to the ideas of individuals, it was impossible to say that the sharp and long ascent in which we found ourselves involved might not be the *Sinch-Kesh* alluded to by the guide. We first wound up a steep slope, then ascended along the lip of a black-looking glen, then crossed its gorge into another valley beyond, after threading which, loftier peaks appeared beyond; then another gorge, which we mounted and crossed, and which admitted us into as wild and terrific a piece of broken scenery as I ever saw. We had obviously managed to clamber up to the higher regions of a huge cluster of mountains, and were crossing one after another the upper ends of the deep chasms that furrow their sides. It appeared equally evident, too, that this could not be the plain and simple road and slight ascent of which our guide spoke, so that the unpleasant conclusion was now forced on us, not only that we had lost our road, but that we had wandered into a savage wilderness, from which, in the darkness of night, it would be hard to extricate ourselves, and which might involve danger of more kinds than one.

The moon, it is true, had risen, but her uncertain light, deepening by contrast the grim shadows where it did not fall, rather added to than diminished our bewilderment. We had risen, as it seemed, to the seventh heaven, and were skirting along precipitous braes and spurs, separating ravines, all of

which proceeded from a noble cliff above us, and lost themselves in a huge glen below, too deep and dark for the eye to penetrate its mysteries, but rising from which here and there a few prominent and insulated points, illuminated by the moon, shone like islands of brightness in a grim ocean. Loftier peaks appeared beyond, and beneath them, on the bosom of the glen, lay a cloud like a shining sea, hiding everything under its bright but impenetrable veil. It needed no ghost to tell us that in pursuing our right-hand course, we had just toiled up to the very height and heart of the noble mountains we had seen on our right during the day's march, and were now looking full down one of the deep passes into Mazunderan.

The dubious pathway still led us upwards till we reached the wall of highest cliffs, around the buttresses of which, of most unpleasant steepness, we wound, by a goat-track so narrow that I often shrunk and shuddered at the black abyss over which we seemed suspended in air. This interesting sort of path, leading, as the Persians have it, by the *cummer* or waist of the rock, continued for full two hours, alternately sinking into darkness or emerging into light, as we rounded a salient angle or fell into its corresponding recess, till at length we found ourselves on a narrow neck, looking back with thankfulness at the nervous escalade we had performed, only as it appeared to plunge again into the jaws of another gulf enclosed on all sides by ranges of serrated cliffs. But here, after a sharp and long descent, our ears were greeted with the comfortable sound of a sheep-dog's bark, and a little further on

we discovered the Eeliaut tent from whence this welcome intimation of the vicinity of man had issued.

We derived little benefit, however, from the rude inhabitant of this black dwelling. He was an old man, who was with difficulty roused from his layer; and who, while he told us we had gone far astray, and had landed among the *yeiláks* of Feerozekoh, instead of keeping the low and regular road to that place, refused for any consideration to guide us to any point from whence we might reach it. All we could extract from him was an assurance, that our road now led up the left of two valleys we should presently reach, and that by so proceeding we should fall in with other tents, where we might be further instructed.

Very reluctantly leaving the old man to resume his broken slumbers, we addressed ourselves to grope out our way along a very tortuous glen, and succeeded in gaining another gorge, where, I suspect, we made another mistake; for, observing a path branching to the left, we again preferred the right of two ravines, and made a rapid descent into another long weary glen. Here we were at length brought to a stand-still by a wall of rock, in which the cliffs on either side appeared to terminate, shutting up all means of egress except by a narrow chasm, through which ran the bed of a torrent now quite dry. Dismounting, we entered, groping our way in darkness, but soon lost all traces of the path in an impenetrable mass of thorns and fragments of rock, while just beyond we could see the precipitous descent of what, in rainy weather, must be a very pretty waterfall. This could not be the horse-path

at all events, so we returned to look for another. Above us rose a rocky promontory, over which a track might possibly wind; but the waning moonlight did not enable us to make it out, for there was so little herbage and many stones, that the footsteps of animals or of men left no traces; so, after looking at my watch, and finding that it wanted but two hours of dawn, I came to the sensible resolution of waiting where we were till the light should come to our assistance. We could not have gone less than seven fursucks,—say twenty-eight miles,—and our horses were hungry enough; unbitting them, therefore, we left them at free liberty to choose the most digestible of the stones around them, and wrapping myself in a horse-cloth (it was very cold) I went quietly and willingly to sleep.

I awoke within a few minutes of the proper time, for the dawn was grey and cold in the east; and before our horses were caught and bridled, there was light sufficient to show that the track, as I suspected, wound above, and that the water-course was impracticable for horses. Thus once more in motion, we descended again, and reached the tents of which we had heard during the night; but it cost us four long hours to reach the point we should have gained by the time we were forced to stop, had we not gone astray at first. I calculate, therefore, that we added full three fursucks, or about twelve miles, to our night's ride, besides the extra severity of exertion to which our horses were subjected in climbing the *cot,huls* and various ascents among the *yeilaks*.

Refreshing ourselves and our horses with breakfast at a little village in the mouth of the glen, we push-

ed on, and passed Feerozekoh without stopping, intending to feed again at a place sixteen miles further on; but in this we were disappointed, as not a grain of corn was there to be had for our horses, nor a bit of bread for ourselves;—so, hungry as both were, we mounted again, after a halt of near an hour, and rode about twenty miles more, burning hot, to Baugh-shah, and there stayed three hours to feed and to refresh. About eleven at night we mounted once more, breakfasted at Gilaur, some twenty miles from Tehran, and then, rather quickening than slackening our pace, reached the gates between half past twelve and one of the afternoon.

That our horses were not done up by this sharp work was testified by a freak of the one I rode, which, on quickening my pace rather suddenly, when near the walls, actually ran away with me until brought up by the bit. As to the riders, so much cannot be said for them, for we were all nodding in our saddles during the night; and after breakfast, when the jeloodar and myself had revived, so completely overcome was the lad who was with us, that it was impossible to keep him one moment awake, and he was forced to stop till evening at a place about ten miles from town. We had just been fifty-five hours from Poulad Muhuleh, of which better than fourteen had been expended in halts, feeding, &c., so that we went the one hundred and seventy-six miles in forty-one hours of travelling, and great part of it over most difficult ground.

I cannot express to you the anxiety I felt during the latter part of the way, not only to arrive, but as to what might be the news awaiting me: were my

friends still in Tehran or not?—should I receive letters from home, and what might be the colour of their contents? Musing on these things I reached the Doolace gate, and was pushing rapidly through it towards the English palace when a ragged fellow of a furosh started up and demanded who we were, and whence we came? I replied to both questions.—"Well," said he sharply, "whoever you may be, you must come with me to the *durkhaneh*, and give an account of yourself there." This I quietly declined, and rode on towards the British residency, telling the man to follow if he pleased. He did so, and I thought nothing of it, but being extremely hot and thirsty, purchased some Sultana grapes at a stall, and ate them as I went along; but when I came to a turning, the man stopped me again, observing that this was not the way to the *durkhaneh*, and that to the *durkhaneh* go I must. I remonstrated again, claiming exemption as an Englishman from rules which could only apply to natives. But others came up and joined him, and insisted, though more respectfully, on turning my horse, tired as I was, to the palace. A squabble must have ensued had I resisted further, so, still strongly protesting, to the palace I went. A longer time than was decorous elapsed before a responsible official appeared to release me, and to him I spoke sharply in complaint of the indignity which had been offered me.

At length I took my way again to the residency. A cold thrill came over me, as, in passing Macneil's door, I saw that it was locked, and I turned with painful anticipation to the main entrance, which was

opened to me by the old seraidar with many a welcome; but there was no sign of inhabitants, and his answer to my first question confirmed all my fears,—*all* the English had left Tehran a month before, and there was not in the place one countryman to welcome me from my pilgrimage. There had been reason to think this might happen, but the news I received near Poolad Muhuleh had raised a contrary hope, if not a conviction in my mind, and the disappointment was greater than it ought to have proved to one who was bound to depend principally on his own resources. But the mind will not always be reasonable; I had nursed up the hope of enjoying here comfort, and counsel, and pleasant communion with my fellows; and, reason or no reason, the disappointment was distressing.

Hot and faint, I begged the seraidar to get me a room and some iced sherbet immediately; but, whether it was the excitement at the palace, or the effects of disappointment operating on an overheated and wearied frame, or the grapes which I had suddenly and profusely eaten, I know not; before, however, he could procure me either, I became so ill that I was forced to lie down on the bare ground, and after suffering half an hour's violent sickness, I was relieved from one cause at least of my disorder; but its effects left me weak as an infant, scarce able to crawl from the spot. Uncertain what all this might tend to, I sent notice of my arrival to my old friend the minister for foreign affairs; and soon after, while lying listless enough upon a carpet, was gratified by a visit of his nephew, also a very pleasant friend of mine.

One cannot know the full value of sympathy and

attention, of the promise of aid and relief, until the total want and hopelessness of such blessings have been felt. I was just in that case when the arrival of Meerza Mahomed Allee brought me comfort. From him I learned all that was to be known regarding my friends, and received promise at least of whatever assistance I might require; but, thank God! my illness went no further, and after a night and day of very willing starvation, I rose, weak indeed, but free from disease, and able to perform my duties, and resume needful occupations.

LETTER XV.

A sharp attack of fever.—Parting with servants.—Visit to the *Moutimud*.—A singular scene.—Leave Tehran.—Soork Kallah.—Lawassoon.—Lar.—Trout-fishing.—Lose our way.—A *Sinehkesh*.—An awkward position.—A bad night-fall.—Rough ascent.—Valerood.—Demawund.—Descent.—Gilauristauk.—Descent into Mazunderan.—Paresp.—Lost Yaboo recovered.—Flies.—Amol.

Tehran, 11th of August.

I RESUME the pen, dear——, with a feebler hand than when I closed my last to you—feebler from illness, although, thank God! the danger is now past; and with a heart most truly grateful to that good God, who has sustained and protected me hitherto, for being able to say that such is indeed the case. Illness, when alone and far from friends, is a sad, depressing, and heart-sinking thing. Perhaps I was too presumptuous, too confident from long experience in my own power and strength; and yet I am conscious of no obvious indiscretion, no particular imprudence, and though experience of my own strength of constitution may have led to imprudence in trying it, it assuredly never gave birth to the shadow of a thought irreverent to the power of him who gave it. No: I have ever been, and am, most thankful for these blessings, and receive this lesson as a warning, perhaps too much required, to remember our own utter helplessness—

our absolute dependence on the Almighty will and protection, and that "in the midst of life we are in death." I hope it will prove effectual.

So, however, it was, that after some long laborious days of writing — of sending visits and other occupations, I breakfasted on the 5th of this month, by invitation, with my friend the Meerza. There were present a number of his friends and some of mine, and we ate an excellent breakfast, and enjoyed ourselves for near three hours — all but the poor Meerza himself, who told me that the day before he had been attacked by a fit of fever commencing with ague. I condoled with him upon this misfortune, observing, that as for myself, I never had been better than I then was; and turning to Meerza Tuckee, a friend of mine, I said it was remarkable that I never was ill while travelling; that in all my former journeys, in India and in Persia, I never had had a day's illness beyond a temporary headache, and that I trusted to completing my present excursion upon the same terms. Well, we separated; I, shaking hands with my friend the Meerza, and telling him to keep his ague at the stave's end, went home, and wrote till near dark, when, having finished my despatches, I went to the stable to see my horses.

Till then I had been perfectly well and strong, but on rising I thought I perceived the slightest sensation of a *swim* in the head, which, if I thought of it at all, I attributed to the length of time I had been worrying over my weary letters; but on going out, a slight thrill of something between heat and cold, and a little obscure shoot down one leg, gave

me a mental twinge, and made me pause and look up to ascertain if the feeling belonged to the night, or to my own frame. "Have I caught cold?" thought I. On returning from the stable the case became clearer. The hot uncomfortable eyes, and one or two thrills in the head, with some other shootings and twitchings about the *præcordia*, declared the disagreeable truth too plainly for mistake. I was in for a fit of fever, and that not six hours after asserting that I never got ill while travelling. I immediately set to — finished closing, sealing, addressing, and despatching my packets; refused all dinner except a cup of tea; took seven grains of calomel, and was in bed by ten.

That night was restless and feverish in the extreme; wild dreams and startings anxiety and pain of head and limbs, and all those miserable feelings with which I have been but too familiar of old, told me that my precaution had not been premature; and in the morning, on removing my mattress from the roof of the house, where I had slept for coolness, to a room below, I made every preparation for an obstinate attack. Yet there was little in my power to do; my situation was sufficiently forlorn. Under the promise of receiving a supply of cash, I had expended, in paying up wages and repairs of establishment, the few ducats that had remained of what I had brought from Khorasan; and I then found the knave who had promised to furnish my wants drew back, unable or unwilling to do so. Thus I was literally without coin to the value of two shillings in the house. In consequence of this want, I had not been able to dismiss or change all my servants,

so that, as I could not employ the defaulters about my person, and had procured but one new and trustworthy man in their room, who could only attend me in the day-time, I never found myself so much forsaken.

That morning I laid out and prepared the medicines which might become necessary, and, taking such other precautions as prudence suggested in case of my head or strength failing, lay down sorely oppressed upon my couch. Hot—hot and restless I was—burning skin and weather—but I had by my side a blessed huge bowl of sherbet with ice floating in it, from which I sipped from time to time, and cooled my unhappy interior. By an hour after noon I discovered that stronger means were needful, and forthwith adopted them; but, in spite of the good effects of certain vigorous measures, I had another terrible night of high fever and great oppression, and I was beginning to think it was going to be a bad business, when towards morning I fell into a disturbed sleep, from which, when I awoke, I found my head less affected, and that I had perspired a little. By breakfast-time a sensible amendment had taken place, and although the fever was by no means gone, I began to hope that the first brush at least was past, and that some interval would be given in which to work, and guard against relapse.

In the mean time, not a human being came near me. I had sent to my friend Meerza Mahomed Allee, old *Fattey's* nephew, to tell him my pecuniary difficulties. He sent word that he would do what he could to help me, but he came not; and very

gloomy images began to present themselves to my imagination. I was aware that, from certain political events occurring just at this time, it was very possible that the English name was not quite so popular as it had been — things might be even worse than I anticipated. My friends here, however well disposed to me personally, might not feel it convenient to show me a countenance which might influence their own interests prejudicially. In short, the gloom of illness had affected my mind, so that everything appeared in dark colours and distorted shapes, far beyond what sober reason would have warranted. More than once I thought of sending for my friend Macneil, but no express would have reached him in less than six or eight days, and he could not, by the greatest exertion, have come in less than four or five, the distance being four hundred miles; so I swallowed my impatience, and bore the blue devils as best I could. Thank God! by the evening of the third day I was decidedly better. A dose of antimonial powder, with a little opium, increased the tendency to perspiration, and procured me a far quieter night's rest than the former ones; and, though the fever did not quit me till the evening of the fourth day, I was able to read a little, and enjoy a visit from Meerza Mahomed Allee, who at last brought a merchant to relieve my pecuniary wants. Since then, *Alhumdulillah!* I have recovered gradually, without any tendency to relapse, and, though weak, am quite free from disease. I have given you this full account of my attack to convince you not only that I conceal nothing, but that I do take very good care of myself; and the weather

being now at its hottest, I think it probable I shall escape any more attacks. Tehrân, to be sure, is at this season as hot a hole as I ever was in; but I shall soon quit it, *inshallah!* for the healthy *yeilâks* of Lâr and the mountains. And now I must mention some few matters that occurred after my arrival, but previous to my illness.

The three days succeeding my arrival were spent in writing, visiting, and reorganizing my shattered establishment. I had a painful work to perform in dismissing my evil-doing servants, but it was a necessary one; and having a full conviction of their guilt, I cut home and spared not. I was reduced to the services of a single person, who was sent by Meerza Mahomed Allee to fill the place of jeloodar, but who served me also as peishkhidmut, or body-servant, during my illness. I know nothing more distressing than thus parting with persons who have gone through much with you, and whom you were well disposed to regard, and feel kindly for, if they would let you — nothing, except parting with truly valuable servants—men who have really exerted themselves to serve you—and that was assuredly not the case here; yet some of them affected a kind of zeal too; perhaps they were not all utterly worthless; but there was no choice, and I had a new set to get on chance, and the old story to go over again.

Among the visits I paid was one to Mamuchcher Khan, the *Moatimud-u-Dowlat*, or "trusted of the state;" the favourite of the King, one of his principal ministers and counsellors, and chief eunuch and superintendent of his majesty's enormous ha-

rem; and there I was witness to a scene which I think worth describing for your amusement. The Khan had already chosen a fortunate hour for leaving the city to proceed to Resht, the seat of his government; and while completing his preparations had encamped, according to Persian fashion, in a garden near the town. I went in the morning to a sort of unceremonious levee, in which his friends and acquaintances came to take their leave of him, and wish him a happy journey; and the first thing that struck me was the dishevelled appearance of the party, most of whom were persons of the first distinction, but scarcely one of whom was fully apparelled. The weather was warm indeed; but though the great man himself might choose to sit in dishabille, and with his loins ungirded, it was scarcely consistent with etiquette for visitors to come either in their night-caps, or without their shawl girdles. The enigma was, however, soon explained. The greater part of the company had been the Khan's guests on the preceding evening, and had remained in the summer-house, where his Excellency resided, all night; but thieves had entered while they slept, and relieved all the party of some portion of their habiliments. Some had lost their caps, some their shawls, some their coats, some everything. Not a few watches and jewelled waist-daggers had been spirited away, with a handsome sum of the minister's own money; nay, the rogues had not spared his Excellency's own proper cap and shawl-girdle. In short, the whole party, though surrounded by the minister's servants and guards, in addition to a high garden-wall, had been most completely and adroitly fleeced. All this

was related and discussed with much good humour and many jokes, and elicited more than one narrative of similar adventures, while the great man himself went through a very prolonged process of ablution and an elaborate toilet, sitting in his own place at the head of the assembly.

During this process one of the servants brought in the carcass of an unhappy lamb, which had undergone the several operations necessary to prepare it for the hands of the cook, but retaining its ghastly-looking head, which grinned most piteously at a mixture of onions and other stuffing intended to replace its ravished intestines, but which, for the time, lay heaped close to its nose on the dish. I naturally imagined that this must be some offering sent for the minister, all ready to put to the fire; and expected, as usual in such cases, that his Excellency would acknowledge the compliment, and then dismiss it from his presence. But such was not the case. On the contrary, at the signal of Aga Balrâm, a very agreeable and accomplished person, one of the King's favourite eunuchs, who was seated close to the Khân at the top of the room, the unseemly delicacy was placed before him. He then requested the loan of the waist and pocket knives of every person in the room in turn, and having chosen the two sharpest, proceeded deliberately, in concert with another man of very high rank, to cut up the raw carcass, dismember it, and strip every bit of flesh from its bones.

Very zealously and knowingly did they execute their work; no Mrs. Glass nor Mrs. Rundell could have excelled them either in skill or application.

Every choice morsel was preserved, while, with reeking, greasy fingers, they tore away and rejected the less delicate bits. The process was long—it occupied an hour or more, proceeding simultaneously with the great man's ablutions. The seasoning, of a strength that brought the water to my eyes, was then applied, and the whole apparatus was sent away with most special directions as to the mode of cookery, and the time required for dressing it. I half expected to hear the charcoal pots ordered into the presence, that the guests might see with their own eyes the preparation of the epicurean dish. Now, only think of such a scene passing at the levee of a European minister of state! Conceive the sensation it would create in the audience chamber of my Lord Grey or Melbourne, or the Duke of Wellington, or Prince Metternich! Yet such *ploys*, like our pic-nics, are not uncommon here; but, certainly, I should never have anticipated seeing one in the audience chamber of the *Moatimud*. It was a good trait of national manners.

17th August.—Lawassoon.—Thank heaven, I am again in the saddle, and with hopes of advancing once more both in health and on my journey. If you were to ask me whether I felt bold and confident in turning my face to one of the hottest regions in Persia at this burning season of the year, I should, in candour, have to reply, not entirely; nay, there were times when I doubted my powers of performing this part of my duty altogether. But I knew, from experience, the magical effect of change of air and scene on myself in particular, and trusted to the healthful stimulus of travelling. Nor did I

prove too sanguine in my calculations. The very leap of joy which my heart gave within me, as I spurred my horse through the Shah Abdool Azeem gate of Tehran, seemed to toss from my breast half the load which had weighed it down, and which had not been decreased by the thousand and one little irks and obstacles which embarrass the commencement of a journey with new servants—ay, or even with old ones.

From the day the fever left me I had pressed forward my preparations, and by the kindness of Meerza Mahomed Allee, procured some people of respectable character to supply my former attendants. My horses, though still thin, had a little recovered their strength. I paid my last farewell visits on the 15th, and resolved to commence my march on the morrow. Whether Saturday be a lucky day or not for breaking ground, according to old saws, I know not, but I was determined not to sleep another night in Tehran. Yet, even in this, I was like to be baffled; for not till past noon of this day did I touch the cash which I required and had drawn for; and it was six in the evening before my loads were fitted, and I bade adieu to the deserted Residency and the dull hot capital, and with still shaking limbs *clombe* into the saddle. Not one of my new people knew the road or country in which we were to travel; so, after some consultation, it was agreed to proceed only as far as Soorkh-kalleh, twelve miles distant, this evening, and from thence, in the morning, to procure a guide, and make the best of our way by Lawassoon and Lâr to Balfroesh, in Mazunderan.

We reached Soorkh-kalleh about nine, where, after a cup of tea, I lay down upon my numud in a field close to the village, and rose the next morning, long before daylight, a new man. Our road had hitherto been that leading towards Feerozekoh; but quitting it we followed the upward course of a little river, which carried us into the heart of the great mass of mountains behind Tehran, and to this village, which lies like a nest in a nook between two masses of rock, as bare as if a drop of dew had never fallen upon them. And yet their hard bosoms pour forth numerous springs, which form various perennial streams, watered by which Lawassoon and its dependent villages repose in the shade of a forest of splendid old walnut and other fruit trees, while the terraced cultivation of the inhabitants covers the whole valley below.

19th August.—Our march yesterday from Lawassoon, which from the difficulty of getting a guide did not commence till six A.M., began by an ascent up the shoulder or neck of one of the bounding hills of the valley—a tug which the position of the village led us to anticipate. Steep, long, and rapid as this ascent proved, when I tell you that I contrived, not without toil indeed, to make my way to the top on foot, you will be able to appreciate the effect of a change, even for two nights and a day, from the hot air of the capital to the cool breezes of the mountains, upon my frame. The ascent occupied us two hours, and then we looked down from the height we had attained upon the valley of Lâr, one of the finest *yeilâks* in this part of the Elburz range.

It is nearly the highest valley of this part of the

mountain, and collects the waters of many of the loftiest peaks, which it transmits through a deep gorge to Mazunderan. It is famous for its air and its grass, which tempt not only the regular wandering tribes from below, but many parties from the court and city, to spend a part of the hot months here, drink the cool water, and enjoy the hunting and other attractions on which Persians put so high a value.

To us Scotch folk it possesses another charm, for its rivers are well stored with the fish of our native hills. Some of the mountain streams of Persia, and those of Lâr, in particular, abound in fine trout. I will not allow that it was this which tempted me to prefer this route, for the result of all inquiry had previously led me to determine on it as the best and the shortest to the point for which I was bound; but certainly the prospect of a little fishing spoiled nothing. Here, alas! I missed my fishing rod and reel, which, as I told you, had been stolen from me at Mushed, and I was obliged to make clumsy shift by cutting down a young Lombardy poplar, of which plants are to be found in almost every garden. A splice from the twig of another did duty for a top, and to this I attached a sufficiency of line, with two capital flies.

Having reached what appeared a most capital pool, and one which the old guide assured me abounded in fish, I dismounted, left the people and horses on a grassy spot, the one to prepare my breakfast, and the others to make sure of theirs, put together my clumsy apparatus, and descended with all the glee of a young hand to the river's

brink. I care not who knows, or who may laugh at the thrill of mingled pleasure and expectation with which I made my first *cast*, nor the disappointment I felt at finding that and the next dozen of throws all utterly unsuccessful; for with more of sanguine folly than became my gravity, I had made up my mind not only that fish must be plenty in these streams, but that the Persians not being fly-fishers, these fish would not be shy, and consequently would rise with avidity to my bait;—that, in short, I should certainly hook a trout the first throw, and pull them out by dozens afterwards. Unfortunately, though Kelly and O'Shaughnessy are names unknown to Lâr,—though the fame of Mackenzie, dear to all Highland loch-fishers, has never reached these regions, nor have the peaks of Demawund, or the glens of Akjah and Valerood, resounded to the praises of Bond and the artists of Crooked-lane,—the knaves who dwell there have discovered that *nets* will catch fish even better than hooks, and it appears that there is usually a heavy drain of this sort on the stream. Thus neither in my first or second pool could I stir a fish; but in the tail of the third, a sweet lively stream as ever gladdened an angler's heart, I was electrified by the first *rise;* many succeeded, and I was rather pleased than annoyed at finding one of my flies carried off by the fourth or fifth, as, though a libel on my skill, it proved that my friends of the stream were of a good size as well as in earnest.

At length, to my no small pleasure, and to the delight of my people, who were all looking on, I hooked and landed a moderate-sized fish, which

proved to be a real red-spotted trout. I could have half devoured him raw—as I afterwards did when broiled—out of sheer boyish gladness. This was but the beginning. Whether it was that at first I had not hit on the good places, I cannot tell, but I now had capital sport, dragging out about two dozen in the course of little more than an hour — good weighty fellows too, of a pound and a half I dare say, that made my crazy tackle shake again. After breakfast, at which I managed to discuss several of my victims, I went to it again, intending to fish down the stream in sight of my baggage, which was to move on slowly, and for a time I was very successful. But about three in the afternoon, the river had become milky from the action of the water on some clayey banks, so that the fish would not take any longer; it was getting late too, and as we had not quite agreed upon our halting-place for the night, I thought it as well to put up my rod and push onwards.

Should any of your friends, to whom you may read this account of my day's sport at Lâr, be inclined to yawn at it, as perhaps *you* may do, rest assured they are no true sportsmen, or they would sympathize in the delight which such a chance in such a scene could not fail to beget in the heart of every brother of the angle. For the guidance of those who are of this respectable fraternity, and who may take a fancy to go and try the Lâr, I will say, that my success was entirely in the running streams and tails of pools—not in the deep pools themselves, however great the *swirl;* and that the common Scotch flies, red and black hackles, with drake's

wing, seemed the favourites; but one forenoon's work gives me no title to judge decidedly on their tastes.

By this time my baggage had got far ahead, and I was plodding on on foot, with one servant, wishing to be once more mounted, when my jeloodar came up with my horse and we pushed on, my other servant still following on foot. Where could the baggage have gone, was the question?—there was no appearance of it to be seen, and the guide was along with it; so, though it might be safe enough, it was otherwise with us, for we knew not even the direction of our purposed route. The last orders given were that the baggage and people should push on till within an hour or two of sunset, and then come to for the night in the first grassy spot which would afford pasture for the beasts. This was all we had to trust to, except that we heard there were black tents and a river, which would serve as a mark to steer by; so on we went, nothing doubting.

We had proceeded but a moderate way when we reached a rivulet, the waters of which, though perfectly limpid, appeared, as they ran in their bed, to be as white as milk. This singular phenomenon was produced by their being so strongly impregnated with calcareous matter, that they had deposited a crust of pure white lime not only on the banks, and all the large stones, but even on the gravel and sand, so that everything was bound together, and the stream ran in a bed like pure white marble full of blocks of the same. The water itself, though quite clear, had also a white tinge, as we see the streams which run through peat-moss tinged with a fine clear

brown. I have no doubt that wood or grass immersed in this stream would very soon become petrified. As we crossed this river the road separated into two, and on looking up the stream we did observe one or two black tents; but, judging from the short distance we had gone and the meanness of the encampment, and seeing nothing of our people, we concluded that the path to the right must be the one for us; and the more so as the direction seemed nearer the true one, and the promise of grass was infinitely better. There was not, indeed, a blade near the wretched tents, which we now left far on our left.

The road we chose pointed towards a shoulder of the mighty Demawund, which rose towering before us in very imposing majesty, and over a part of which we knew we were to cross. On we pushed therefore, nothing doubting, but wondering nevertheless as much at seeing neither tents nor grass, as at the good speed our baggage must have made; for I promise you, that though one of us was on foot, we none of us let the grass grow under our feet. At length, after proceeding about ten miles from the white river, and just as the sun was declining, we were brought up by a deep rocky ravine, at the bottom of which ran a torrent evidently coming from the vast shoulder of Demawund, which we had been approaching, and the roar of which came up threateningly from its abyss: dark, and grim, and formidable I assure you it looked, as its water foamed and twisted far below out of reach of the sun's slanting beams. But as no imaginable chasm can be too deep or difficult for a Persian road, we never doubt-

ed that in this cavern, dark and drear, our way was to be found. The path, however, which we hitherto had followed, and which of late had been diminishing in importance, seemed to lose itself near the edge of this gulf in the bare site of some former encamping ground of the Eeliauts, who graze this country in early summer. But with some difficulty we detected a dark and dubious track, leading along the face of a *scaur*, rather dangerous and disheartening to be sure, at the decline of day, and not very clear in its direction or object—yet there was nothing else for it. We had heard of a *cot,hul* too, a short ascent, and the craggy mass, which rose full two thousand feet above us, seemed to promise us, "that at least:"—your Persian highlanders have no bowels for those of lower regions, and what most people would term a devilish steep ascent they call a *sinchkesh* (a pull upon the breast), or a little up and down; so we still presumed that all was right, and, setting our breasts to the hill-side, up we went.

We were soon dismounted, for neither regard for our own safety nor consideration for our poor tired horses would permit us to keep on their backs; and we took to clambering on foot up a mass of rock and mingled weeds, which in spring forms a torrent's bed. Sometimes the presumed pathway,—for it had become very dubious whether it were a path or not,—led us up a projecting nose where the marks of animals gave us fresh hopes,—nay, one of the people was ready to swear to the foot-marks of one of our own yaboos; but the next turn threw us into doubt again, for all trace and track were lost amongst stones and withered vegetation; yet still on we toiled,

panting and tugging at our wearied horses, and dripping with perspiration in spite of the height and increased cold of the locality.

I cannot, or rather will not, attempt to describe to you all our turnings and windings on this misadventurous evening, though they are well engraven on my own memory; but begging for due sympathy on a desperate quantum of panting and fatigue, I will carry you at once to the utmost height, which we arrived at just a few minutes after the sun had set, and saw ourselves perched upon the verge of what appeared an unfathomable hollow, walled in on all sides by impervious precipices, with the huge Demawund staring full upon us, as rash intruders, from the opposite side. On one of these walls, the practicable side of which we had expended so much labour to scale, we now found ourselves, looking over a scarped rock of at least a thousand feet high into this precious gulf, and with the shades of night just falling round us. I shudder now more than I did then at the bare recollection of the sight, which at that time awakened more anxiety about our lost road than terror at our danger.

That we had lost our way needed no proof, for nothing without wings could have proceeded any further in that direction, and our wearied steeds were no *Pegasi*, heaven knows. The only question now was, what's to be done? and that was more easily put than answered. And here I must beg to point out the difference which exists between theory and practice in common life as well as in philosophy—between matter of fact and matter of speculation—between real and fictitious distress. In a

well-told tale now, as one sits in his snug parlour before the bright fire, a foot on each hob, and a decanter of old port or madeira at one elbow, or read aloud by some good-natured brother or papa at a busy round table covered with work and surrounded by fair listeners,—in such a tale an incident like this, of benighted wanderers, would bring delight to all the hearers; it would be the awakening point of interest, the signal for open ears and outstretched necks, the sure token of approaching adventure—of robbers and caverns, of remote fastnesses, of rough but hospitable chieftains, of secluded but captivating and interesting damsels at the very least—of a hermit or dervish, appearing like a convenient heathen deity to help and relieve the way-lorn travellers. Alas! how little of such interest does the homely truth in cases like these most commonly possess—how different the feelings of the sufferers from the pleasurable excitement experienced by the listeners to their distress.

Romance and its miracles apart, we were out of reach of all human aid. The wandering tribes having eaten these hills bare, had left them tenantless. It was the old marks made by their cattle, when grazing weeks before, that had misled us; and the place, nay, the whole range within our ken, afforded nothing fit to sustain the life of man or beast, unless it were a mountain sheep or goat, or the tiger who generally follows in the track of these animals, and whose traces we had remarked in the ascent. How welcome would have been the bark of a dog, the sound of a bleating sheep! but all was still as death except the roar of a cataract which ascended hoarsely

from the gulf below our feet. I directed my spying-glass around, while yet there was light, to detect, if possible, some sign of the abode of man; but the darkness settled thicker down upon the country, and nothing could be made out—not a spark of fire, however distant, to mark the site of an encampment. One thing only was clear, and that was, that we had no business there. The cold was great, a keen wind had arisen, and not one of us had even a cloak; so in far less time than I have taken to write this we turned our steps downwards, leading our horses as before, at the imminent danger of their tumbling over upon us, which mine once or twice narrowly missed doing.

In a dangerous and rapid descent, I do not know that the toil and pain to the limbs are not greater than in the corresponding ascent: one is a shorter time about it, but the knees and thighs suffer more. We had ascended in an hour and a half; perhaps we were not more in descending, but the risk of slipping and falling was greater, and I do not think we could have accomplished it without accident, but for the light of a glorious moon which rose to our aid before we were half way down. I shall never forget the ghastly, death-like effect of its light upon one half of the beetling crags around us, while the rest, together with the deep abyss beneath, lay buried in utter darkness. At length we reached the bottom, and after consulting on the expediency of remaining there, cold, hungry, and exhausted as both horse and man were, we resolved that it was better to return ten miles to the point where the roads separated, on the chance of finding that our people had gone

the other way; and, at all events in hopes that the owners of the tents we had seen there, could give us assistance and refreshment; corn for our poor horses we knew they had none, but grass we trusted might be procured. You will remember that one of us was on foot all this time, so that to proceed fast was impossible, had even the exhausted state of our horses admitted of it; yet the condition of him on foot was in some respects better than that of the mounted men, for the sharp wind chilled us through our thin clothes, moist with perspiration. Nevertheless we took heart of grace, and pursued our weary way steadily towards the tents.

I know nothing more wearing out than the slow lapse of time on such occasions, when every long-drawn minute and second falls on the tired senses like the slow but constant dropping of water on a stone; only that the stone is insensible, whereas the mind is more nervously sensitive than at other times, and feels each division of time as it goes past with torturing acut ess; but the weariest hours will pass away, and in time we made our point. The tents had been struck, and the shepherds, having eaten the place bare, had collected their flocks in order to leave it. They told us that our people had in fact passed that way, and that we should find them about four or five miles further up the glen. I shall say nothing regarding this additional toil; we reached the spot at last, and found that nothing whatever was to be had for our poor horses; the others, with the baggage cattle, were nibbling on a bit of bare meadow at the stumps of the grass, which the sheep of the Eeliauts had previously consumed, and

we turned ours to the same profitable occupation. As for ourselves, we were better provided for; a little boiled rice, with part of a wild duck I had shot, and some of my own cold trouts, awaited me, and about one in the morning I turned in under my coverlet, which was insufficient to keep out the bitter cold that even at this season reigns in these high regions. And now having, as I hope, imparted to you, dear ——, a little of the weariness which this long day's work had inflicted on myself, you will probably, like me, be glad of a few hours' repose.

There was little to induce us to make a long halt in this inclement region of starvation. A sense of what was due to our poor horses was of itself a sufficient inducement to carry them to where they might get food, so after three hours' rest, that is at four o'clock this morning, we were on foot again. The beginning of our day's work was a tough one, the road leading us up a *col*, *hul*, more distressing from its roughness, it being one mass of large rocks and stones without any intermixture of earth, than from its height, though that was far from despicable, and from its crest we overlooked as wild and rugged a country as Salvator's mind ever imagined, or his pencil delineated; but not a tree nor bush was to be seen. There were, however, here and there a few Eeliaut tents, the cattle belonging to which were doing as ours had done last night; tearing with teeth and hoof at the well-gnawed stumps of the herbage they had already devoured. A little further on, however, we found a greener strip, where we permitted our beasts to graze for a while. Another

small winding ascent brought us to a height from which we looked down into a valley rather greener than those we had just left, at the further end of which rose our old friend Demawund, now smiling in the morning light; laughing, I dare say, at the trick he had played us the night before.

It was now plain that we had been forced to make an immense detour of twenty miles at least, to turn the rocky ridge which we had attempted to scale last evening, but found, as others had before us, impracticable; and as we now descended into the valley, and reached its other extremity, just under Demawund, we found ourselves exactly below the crags which had baffled us, the northern face of which was little less precipitous than their southern exposure, —and upon the bank of the stream which, bursting at this point through the ridge, had formed by a bend in its deep bed the gulf on whose brink we had stood. We breakfasted and grazed our horses in the valley, which, as well as the banks of the stream, was occupied by the Eliauts. It forms a favourite yeilák, known by the name of Valerood, the stream being called the Ab-e-valerood. I saw the beautiful trout glancing through its crystal waters, but our resting place for the night was far off, so that I could not stay to secure myself a dinner from among them.

Our course from hence lay right up an inclined plane to the base of the great cone of Demawund. This cone is volcanic, and composed entirely of such materials as volcanos throw forth, pumice-stone and dark basalt; and sulphur exhales from numerous crevices, and aggregates in masses, which are gathered by the people of the neighbourhood for sale. The

plain we traversed was one mass of basalt and pumice. It was a dreary and gradual ascent, including more than one rocky pass, short but tough, and led at length to the highest western shoulder of Demawund itself. I wish you could have seen the spectacle that opened on us from this elevated position. The close view of a lofty mountain is at all times one of the most imposing sights in nature, and we here enjoyed it in very rare perfection. The cone of Demawund, a vast uniform mass, rose upon our right to the height of at least five thousand feet above our heads, we being eight thousand more above the level of the sea.* Full three thousand feet beneath the spot on which we stood, lay a vast basin-like hollow, descending from his northern bosom, so that from the summit, looking northwards, we had a sheer, unbroken, and very precipitous descent of from seven to eight thousand feet: one felt himself catching his breath, as if falling, while gazing downwards. Beyond this hollow, in front, lay a confused mass of mountainous crags, the intricacies of which the eye was at a loss to unravel, forming the yeilâks of Larijoon, seen rising over those of Arjumund, while further to the left we just peeped down the steep passes that lead into Mazunderan: I could distinguish the summits of its wooded mountains, and the heavy mass of vapours that brooded over the Caspian Sea.

* Subsequent barometrical experiments have proved the apex of this cone to be fifteen thousand feet above the level of the sea, so that the estimated heights in the text are under, not over the truth.

You will ask, perhaps, why I did not attempt to sketch this magnificent *coup d'œil?* I reply, that even had the bitter cold wind and waning day permitted me to attempt it, I had neither materials nor courage to try such a work. A long day would have been required, with the talents of a Turner or a Stanfield, to have gone to the task with any prospect of success; so I just gazed and admired as long as I could, and then addressed myself to descend with all convenient speed from my altitudes.

There was little snow upon the cone of Demawund on this side, and that which there was did not form a cap, but lay in long streaks and patches extending almost from top to bottom. The cone itself seemed to the eye to be formed of loose scoriæ and gravel, out of which stared the black basalt in masses which from a distance appeared like bushes and coppice-wood on the grey surface. The deep northern face was riven into hollows by the winter torrents, and each hollow had its corresponding height or ridge, as we found to our cost when we began to cross them below. The bottom of the basin indeed, which appeared smooth and level from above, was found to be one most rugged mass of craggy and uneven ground, covered with vast fragments of *débris* from the huge bosom of the mountain. I could gain little information from the people here or elsewhere regarding the formation of, or phenomena exhibited by, this huge peak. I saw no vapours hovering about, or issuing from it, as is said to be often the case, nor could I hear of any considerable crater

at the summit.* The few who have succeeded in reaching it report that the cone, as is obvious from below, so nearly reaches a point that there can be little space upon its top; that there is a small hollow in which the snow-water lodges and becomes ice, but to no great depth; the person who described it to me, said it might take a man up to his middle; but added, that there were in it the creatures called *kirm-e-yek*, ice-worms, which it is asserted exist also on Mount Ararat, blue, transparent, ice-like creatures, from six inches to a foot long.

In all my attempts at describing to you the mountain scenery of this country, I feel quite at a loss to convey to you a just and vivid idea of Persian passes or *cot,huls*, since (our notions being necessarily formed from objects previously seen) I remember nothing which has met your eye that can suggest a true image of what I would impress upon your mind, albeit you have seen some scenes of great grandeur. You must remember that we were now crossing the highest portion of the highest mountain range in this country, at least eight thousand feet above the level of the sea. Suppose this range to consist of a succession of naked rocky ridges, not rounded, like most European hills, by a clothing of soil, but rising from the separating valleys, themselves very elevated, in sharp serrated cliffs, with sides extremely steep and ploughed into innumerable ravines by the action of winter torrents. The huge, bare limestone rocks, of

* There is no crater at the summit, but a cave just beneath, which emits sulphurous fumes, and the temperature of which is always high.

which for the most part they consist, yield no pasture and are void of vegetation; but where the action of the weather has decomposed this rock and worn it into soil, which has been washed down to their bases, it forms a lower region, which in its turn is infinitely subdivided by torrents, and which, when fertilized by the presence of water, yields grass and herbage in abundance. The innumerable hillocks into which this detritus is worn, form another very remarkable feature in Persian mountain scenery. Among them springs are frequently found, which joining, form the mountain streams, and in their vicinity and course it is that the richest herbage sprouts. Such are the spots that have tempted villagers to settle and cultivate the lower parts of these narrow valleys; while the Eeliauts, when they have exhausted the scanty pasture which the rain of spring calls forth, proceed to the higher grounds and settle for the summer around the meadows in the loftier mountains, which are nourished by the remoter sources of these streams. Thus we find the whole of these mountains peopled, though sparsely, and the communication between villages and districts has formed pathways in all directions. But these paths remain exactly as nature made them — no hand of man has ever removed a stone or smoothed an obstacle to ease the feet of his beast or of himself; moreover, as no Persian peasant nor Persian muleteer ever dreams of saving his own labour or that of the animals he drives, but only thinks of taking the shortest way from one given point to another, it signifies nothing to him how steep or how rough the ascent may be; he knows that his

mule or his yaboo can climb almost like a cat, and if it *can* make out the pass he is satisfied, be the exertion severe as it may. Should a more than commonly bad step occur, he unloads his beasts, drags them up or down, by the tail perchance, transports the loads, taken to pieces, on his own back across the dangerous point, or swings them down by a rope, and reloading, quietly proceeds as before. It is only in cases where roads of great traffic, sanctioned by immemorial use, have been rendered impassable by accident or the effects of weather, that human labour is occasionally employed to facilitate the transit of passengers or merchandise, and then impassable obstacles are removed, or a rude attempt may be made to build up the pathway destroyed by the washing of a stream, or the slip of a rock; but so frail and insufficient are such repairs in general, that one would imagine the intention had rather been to lay a trap for travellers than provide for their security. Thus you must endeavour, when travelling with me up and down these passes, to discard from your mind all notion of a road, or imagine at best such a goat-path as you may have seen on the side of one of our own Highland hills: suppose, for instance, the steepest hill-face on Loch-Ness side exalted to twice its height, and bared of wood or verdure, and a caravan winding its way upwards among the stones and rocks of such a precipice, or in one of the torrent beds that indent its breast, and then you may have a chance of accompanying me in imagination across the Elburz mountains.

And certainly, from the crest where I have kept you shivering so long in the cold wind, we had to

commence as severe a descent down the shoulder of Demawund as any I have lately seen. Like birds taking wing from a pinnacle, we boldly launched ourselves forth from a projecting point down an almost perpendicular cliff, winding in and out among its sinuosities like lizards crawling on its surface. Long use had worn pathways in the stone so deep, that they resembled galleries cut by art, and so narrow that my loaded mules refused to go through, and we were forced to unload them and carry the things ourselves. After pursuing this perilous zigzag for about a thousand feet perpendicular, we found ourselves upon a more inclined descent, formed entirely of masses of pumice and basalt, among which an equally tortuous and most tedious path brought us to the bottom of the basin which we had seen from above. No one dared to mount his horse, each man led his own; and when, having accomplished the descent to this level in about an hour and a half, we looked upward, it was provoking to see the cliffs from which we had dropt beetling over head so close that we seemed to have done nothing. In fact, the greater part of the descent lay still before us; but it was gentle compared with what we had accomplished, although the path lay over a mass of fragments that did no good to the horses' feet.

A long and most fatiguing track across the bottom of the basin, which is formed of the matter vomited from some former crater of Demawund, and of débris from his side, and which was torn into a most irksome succession of sharp, though petty heights and hollows, brought us, weary and longing for rest, just about sunset, to our *munzil*, a

small village in a hollow, just above the pass into Mazunderan; and when you remember that our poor horses and mules neither this day nor the previous one had had a morsel to eat, except their scanty pickings on the way-side during the hours of breakfast and very short halts, and that this day's journey of thirty miles in distance was equal in fatigue and duration to fifty upon plain road, you will have some grounds for judging of the powers of endurance of Persian cattle, as well as of the trials their mettle is sometimes put to. Our resting place is one of a cluster of small villages, which compose a *ballook* or district called Gilauristook, the chief of which, Allee Koolee Beg, an officer of the *Kara-chogees* of Larijoon, received me civilly enough, particularly after being convinced that I was an Englishman and not a Russian, as the villagers at first imagined. But this did not prevent them from fleecing me handsomely in the matter of provisions for horse and man, and in plaguing me with their tricks about a guide; nor could I, weary and exhausted, afford to dispute the matter with them.

21st August.—Amol, another of my old stages. The fatigue of the two preceding days, together with the usual delays incident to procuring a guide, detained us at Gilauristook till seven o'clock, when we commenced our descent. It was then, and not till then, that we became better acquainted with the character of this curious district—a character, indeed, which applies to all those of similar relative situation in this range of mountains. From the level of the basin which we had reached, the country becomes still more broken than above; the valleys degenerate into nar-

row, but very deep and abrupt ravines, or rather clefts, of which the wedge-like bottom is entirely occupied by the streams that have formed them. This want of level the inhabitants supply by making ledges everywhere to retain such soil as can be scraped together, and forming terraces, to which, by courses, they lead the waters of the springs or rivers, and cultivate their rice, their gardens, orchards, vines, and other fruits or vegetables suited to the soil and situation; and you cannot imagine what strange positions have been chosen for these villages; we saw them perched on little ledges of rock overhanging a giddy precipice, or crowning a small projecting height among their fine old trees, or cradled like crows' nests—perhaps rather like those of sea-fowl, in clefts to which, for the life of us, we could not imagine how they had got.

The village where we slept was placed on one of these sharp projecting points, dividing two deep clefts, the streams of which met at its termination. These being united, joined my old friend the Lâr, which now, swelled by contributions from a multitude of valleys into a furious torrent, rolled along under the name of the Herauz. On looking on either hand into these ravines, the head was made giddy by the depth to which they so suddenly sunk, and the absolute precipice on which you found yourself standing. Yet at the very bottom of these abysses, where you would imagine the sun could never penetrate, you saw small groups of houses, each surrounded by its mass of green foliage like little emeralds shining in the brown rock. It was like something ideal—not real; one could not imagine such a thing in nature; I

do assure you that the ravines were scarcely so broad as that of R——, and at least six times as deep, and utterly bare of all wood or verdure, except at the sites of these villages, and these shone like gems.

What words shall I use to give you a notion of our descent from this point? I cannot forget, though I may fail in describing it. For four miles it ran along the crest or edge of this nose-like promontory; sharp as a knife, with the horrible pit on either hand to receive us if we should make a slip; sometimes it preferred a slanting line, no broader than your hand, down one side of the long projection, which, however, was fortunately earthy in part, and thereby afforded a better footing to our horses and beasts of burthen: I need not say we *led* them down the whole of it. In all my experience in Persia I had seen nothing like this day's descent, nor, I may add, like that of yesterday; and the scenery around me was quite of a novel character, in which the savage and majestic were singularly united. After the eye had adapted itself, in some measure, to the gigantic and contorted features of the scene, and had rested wondering on the tiny spots which betokened the abode of man, one began to wonder by what means the adventurous inhabitants communicated with their homes and their fellow men; nor was it till after a close investigation that we detected certain lines, of colour lighter than the ground, traversing the face of such declivities, and ascending such precipitous-looking slopes, that, but for the zigzag direction they so often assumed, no mortal would have believed them to be pathways.

But we had better proof that they were really pathways, for by such a one we at length reached the bottom of the aforesaid promontory, and dropt into the bed of the left-hand stream, between two most rugged and scarred walls of rock, so high, that the birds of prey, which floated half way up between them, looked like gnats. Down this strange trough of rock we descended rapidly along with the stream, often in great difficulty and no small danger, till, in the midst of the wildest part of it—in a chasm like the rift of an earthquake,—we were surprised by the sight of a noble walnut tree; then came a second and a third, and then a little turn in the rock opened out a narrow strip of wood and numerous fruit trees. It was the village of Kahrood, one of these little green spots we had seen from above, and I cannot adequately describe its beauty. The houses were hid in a grove of the most magnificent walnut and chestnut trees, under whose shadow we rode for full half a mile. There were other fruit trees in abundance, besides willows, and poplars, and fine plane trees, with vines climbing up and mantling them with their rich festoons: unluckily for us the grapes were not yet ripe; and, indeed, we could get no fruit here except a few half-green pears; so far was the climate behind that even of Tehran.

Here we breakfasted, surrounded by verdure and sparkling dashing waters, and under as sweet a shade of boughs as ever screened a peasant from the sun. Beyond were everywhere walls of living rock, rising to a height far beyond our ken. It was a lovely thing to see; but Heaven defend me from ever living

in such a spot, where I could not stir fifty feet from my own door on level ground! A Highland clergyman, resident in the parish of Edderachylis, in Sutherlandshire, states gravely, in a statistical account of that parish, that it does not contain naturally as much level ground as would afford a site for a house; now here, as well as in most parts of the Muhuleh of Larijoon, the assertion would be true to the letter, for without artificial aid I do not believe a spot of level ground could be found. Indeed, there is scarcely earth at all; insomuch, that I wondered to see the houses built of mud and sun-dried bricks instead of stone, as I should have supposed the mud to have been by far the rarest material of the two.

Yet it was a sweet spot, and we enjoyed the hour we rested here—a pleasure deeply paid for by the toil of our after progress. From hence there were two roads, we were told; but one, the shortest, had, it seems, been rendered impassable by some late slip of the rock, so that we were forced to make use of the other, which led over the ruins of some peak that had been hurled from the wall that towered above us. Thus we had to mount again once more, and to sprawl, and slip, and stumble down a still more desperate descent to the deep bed of our old friend of Làr, now the Herauz, grown huge and noisy in its prosperity, like many others. On our way we saw the track of the road we had been forced to relinquish, and which, bad as our present path was, we thanked God, had been rendered confessedly impracticable. It was indeed terrific: we saw the stream issue in foam and fierceness from a black

gorge above us, and precipitate itself in a succession of rapids, or rather falls, into the river below; but how a road could have ever existed along its course was past our powers to imagine. In fact, they told me that in one part it *might* be necessary to lower the loads by the mule-ropes, and even to assist the animals themselves; yet who of us could doubt the powers of Persian mules after what they had just done for us?

We had now reached the bottom of this perilous *cot,hul,* and were in the glen of the Herauz, which came thundering and tumbling from a chasm, which made a fool even of that we had descended. Along the banks of this river it appeared our road was to wind for the rest of the way; but I found we had only changed the nature of our difficulties, and that those now to be encountered were greater rather than less, especially for the horses and mules. In truth, we had been warned of this last night at Gilauristook, when complaining to the villagers of the badness of the descent from Demawund. "It is paradise," said they, smiling, "to what you will see to-morrow." I thought this was said with malicious intent to alarm us, but they were right. The track lay all the way upon the stones and gravel of the river's bed, and nothing could be imagined more painful to horse or rider. The river being too large for fording, we could not avail ourselves of the space on either side as such occurred; so that, when the stream swept close to the side, the path of necessity was carried high above the rock, or passed across its face above the water. To surmount the rock was in most cases impracticable, so that advantage had

generally been taken of some narrow ledge, and a path worn or constructed, by which asses or mules, slightly loaded, could be taken, though not without great peril.

The frequent accidents which thus occurred occasioned some munificent or charitable person to undertake the improvement of some of these "bad steps," and in the course of this day's march I observed more marks of human industry upon the road than I remember to have seen since surmounting the *Cothul-e-Dochter*, near Kauzeroon. Where the rock would not otherwise yield, there had been recourse to quarrying; in other places to building a foundation; some chasms had been filled up, and a slight parapet wall had been built in one or two of the worst places; but in others the repairs were less substantial, consisting of poles driven into the crevices of the rock, and beams laid across them from one projection to another, with branches so disposed as to support (while they lasted) a floor of earth or gravel; a dangerous expedient, being liable to be washed away with the first heavy shower. There likewise had been thrown over the river one or two bridges of a neat and ingenious, but slender construction, which trembled alarmingly as our loaded mules picked their way across.

There were vestiges of more substantial improvements in some parts, and extending for several miles. These had been commenced by a liberal noble of these parts, one Tahmasp Khan, who had projected a good road all along the right bank of the Herauz; but his death put a stop to the enterprize, of the nature of which, the piers of a substantial bridge,

and a great deal of building to support the road, remain as witnesses. The present chief of Larijoon, Abbas Koolee Khan, has also done something towards facilitating the progress of caravans, but no one has followed up the more munificent intentions of Tahmasp Khan.

For eight mortal hours after our breakfast halt did we toil over twenty miles of this torrent bed, on the huge rounded stones of which our horses slipped and stumbled, varied by occasional "bad steps," where we were forced to take off the larger loads to enable the animals to pass. Twice, in crossing the river, our mules became so frightened at the roar of the stream, that we were forced to unload and blindfold them ere they would cross; and one of the yaboos went fairly over the side, and was only saved from being dashed to pieces by a slight projection of the rock, which enabled the men to recover him, ere it was too late, at the expense of part of his hide: several other misadventures of less moment occurred, and the toil we underwent this day is indescribable. We walked much more than we rode, and yet the horses went through more fatigue than on a march of three times the length on a good road. The sun had nearly set when we reached Pâresp, our place of bivouac, a spot where the glen opens for the first time, so as to afford space for a few acres of ground, which are cultivated with rice. A little grass grows on the borders of the grain, and here caravans usually halt for the night, and avail themselves of the scanty picking. So we brought to for a few hours to rest both ourselves and our horses; fortunately, we had brought

some corn for the latter from Gilauristook, so that they had a supper at all events.

We had now made entry into the jungle of Mazunderan, and this day's march had exhibited to us in singular perfection all the changes which occur in a transition from the high and arid to the low, moist, and rich provinces; nor can human imagination figure a more magnificent variety of scenery, so far as can be produced by rock and mountain, wood and torrent, in all possible shapes. The savage and wild predominated however, particularly in the earlier part of the march; and I question whether any range of mountains, even the Himâlas themselves, can furnish a bolder and more terrific landscape, in its peculiar sort, than the glen of the Herauz and its two subsidiary streams, with their barriers of lofty and naked rocks. The Himâlas are more grand,—there are no mountains so grand,—but they want the savage barrenness and the sharp serrated severity of these mountains of Larijoon. These belong, I suspect, to Persia and Arabia alone—perhaps to some of the Sierras of Spain.

Next morning we were on foot by three. I had appointed midnight as the hour for loading, but, after two weary marches, it was no wonder to find sleep more powerful than duty. The chief difficulties of the pass had been conquered, but there was still a long track of stones to traverse, and one "bad step," *par excellence*,—a worthy termination to such a defile. The path, for a considerable space, had been built of beams and boughs along the face of the rock above the river, but was so narrow and dangerous that we had to unload all the baggage cattle;

this cost much time of itself, but a worse cause of delay occurred while thus occupied, for a pony, loaded with all my cooking gear, which had foolishly been tied by the cook to the twig of a bush, was found to have disappeared. Here was a business,—the uproar, and fuss, and inquiry it occasioned, were so great, that it was some time before I could get the rascal of a cook to say what had really happened. He declared at length that he had himself seen the beast, after a struggle and a neigh or two, break loose, take to the river and cross it, and consequently that it was actually on the opposite side. This tale sounded so improbable, that every one broke forth in abuse, and swore he was not only a knave, but a liar. Would any beast in its senses, they said, that could help it, dream of taking to a stream that would surely carry it off and drown it?—the thing was absurd. For my part, I set it down as certain that the horse had been hidden in the jungle, either by a party of Eeliaut herdsmen who had preceded us, or by certain Jew merchants who passed us while entangled in this difficult place, and who had engaged my attention by showing me some antiques; and I too abused the fellow for a lying scoundrel. Yet still, while the rest of the people dispersed in search of the animal, the man remained gazing at the other side, and stoutly declaring that the pony had, in very deed, committed the desperate act of taking to the tumbling water. I was satisfied that he persisted in this tale only because he knew that he could not be convicted: my jeloodar appeared to be of the same opinion as the cook; for, taking one

of the horses, he rode to a point on the bank where the stream was broader, but less furious, with the intention of trying to ford it. I stopped him by telling him, that if he were mad I was not, and did not mean to risk fifty tomauns, besides a man's life, for the bare chance of recovering twenty or twenty-five. He then proposed to try the passage on foot, but I only gave him an impatient answer, and was turning to proceed on my way, giving up the beast for lost, when I observed the guide, who had accompanied us from Gilauristook, already stripped to the skin and entering the river. I called aloud upon him to desist; said that even if the cook had told truth, the yaboo must have been carried off and long since drowned,—that I gave him up. But he either heard me not or cared not, for in he went, and I watched with horror for the moment when he, too, should be swept away. Such, however, was not the case. To my astonishment, he not only bore up against the fierce current, but, by help of a stick, made his way bravely across, the water not reaching much above his waist in depth, but leaping up to and even over his shoulders.

On reaching the other side, after shaking himself for a moment, away he went in quest of the stray yaboo up the bank. He seemed to pause for a few seconds on the top, when off he set at score, as I thought, to warm himself after his cold bath—for as to hopes of his finding the beast, never having for a moment believed the cook's tale, I did not entertain any. A full hour passed in very unpleasant suspense, and a thousand conjectures were made as to what could have become of the man, when, to end

them all, lo, and behold! he appeared quietly seated on the identical yaboo's back, thus not only proving the cook's truth, but the yaboo's madness and wonderful strength; for the place where he plunged in was a perfect whirling rapid. As to the practicability of its passing where the man had forded, he soon showed that by forcing the brute to carry him through at the same spot. We received him with shouts of applause, but he appeared infinitely more pleased with a matter of five ducats, which I put into his hand on landing: for once, even the avidity of a Persian was satisfied.

Blithely now did we resume our way, and the more so as the rest of the road to Amol was, we were assured, both plain and good, and, in fact, it proved to be so. The glen now opened out, and the path lay along the level ground on the river bank, sometimes among thick jungle, at others among fine old open wood and glades of pasture, and over smooth turf. But little did we know what a plague was lying in wait for us in this easy and pleasant-looking road. Last night a muleteer, on his way to Balfroosh, advised us to get out of the jungle, if possible, before the sun should be up, as we should otherwise be terribly annoyed with flies; but little, as I said, did we dream of the reality. No sooner had the sun burst forth, than, with the very first of his rays, there rushed from the recesses of the jungle such myriads of flies as could be likened to nothing but one of the plagues of Egypt. Flies, said I? winged imps rather, of the size of wasps or garden bees, and which, coming with infinite fury, settled on every part of horse and man, and wherever

they struck their fangs the blood spirted out as from a lancet wound. But the numbers! the largest swarm of bees you ever saw did not equal the cloud which enveloped every one of us; head, neck, breast, belly, and hind-quarters of each horse were blackened in a moment — the very air was darkened. They entered the eyes, and ears, and mouths of the riders, crept into every crevice, and under every garment, in a way equally wonderful and distracting. It was no marvel that the poor animals were absolutely maddened—the horses kicked, and reared, and flung in a way which made it difficult to keep one's seat, while the mules could not be restrained, and rushed frantically into the bushes, to the utter discomfiture of their loads, in their efforts to dislodge the enemy.

Nothing remained for it but flight, that was obvious. The way was now plain; I called aloud for every one to do the best he could for himself, and make for Amol; then giving my own horse the head, I went off as fast as he chose, which was fast enough, poor beast, while he bit, and tossed, and kicked like a devil all the way to get rid of his tormentors. Seizing a towel which happened to be by me, I kept buffeting him and myself alternately on all sides, killing and striking off thousands, only to be replaced by other thousands; and thus we scoured along blindly almost through bush and brake, and stream and bog, for nearly three hours. My towel was actually steeped in blood, and my poor grey *gougercheen*, the dove! was all, breast, flanks, and belly, in gore. As we left the heavy jungle, however, our enemies gradually quitted us, and the last two

hours or ten miles of our ride were performed in comparative quiet. About ten A.M. I entered Amol, attended by one servant; the rest did not make their appearance for more than an hour after. The mules had run wild into the bushes, and the servants themselves, blinded and distracted by the swarms of devils, could scarcely reclaim or reload them. Had we got through this space before sunrise, or even had the vile yaboo not caused us so much delay, we should have escaped this infliction, for these fiends of flies during the hours of darkness do not come forth.

Here then we are in Amol, a place I well remember, not indeed as a brilliant or extensive town, but one that was respectably inhabited, one which was the residence of a rather promising young prince, whose little court imparted to the place a bustle and importance, which, however ancient, may not at all times have belonged to it. What was it now?—a ruin—a desert. What has caused the change?—tyranny and plague. Of all the districts which had been visited in Persia by this fell scourge of mankind in the east, I knew that Ghilân and Mazunderân had suffered most, and I was prepared to find a diminution of population in both provinces; but I was not prepared for what I did see here. I rode through many of the streets which were grown up with thick jungle, and where the roofless walls, the broken tiles and bricks—ruins of former houses—alone told what had once existed there. Not a soul was ɔe seen, not a voice was heard; and I might have bted the fact of my arrival at the place, had not n old friend the monument of Meerza Bozoorg, Seyed Qhwâm-u-deen, stared me in the face. It was

a ruin before, but the dilapidations of the last twelve years were terrible. I dare say we rode hither and thither for more than twenty minutes before, turning a corner accidentally, I found myself in what had been the bazâr, but in which now only three or four shops were occupied. From the half dozen persons I met collected there, I learned that of the few inhabitants left by the plague, the greater number had gone to the *yeilaks* to avoid the heats; and they wondered sore at me for having left the high country to come to such a stew-pot as Amol.

It was not without difficulty that I procured the few supplies I needed; but of these, excellent melons and water melons were among the cheapest and most welcome. But the sight of the place gave me the blue devils, and I resolved to leave it alone in its glory by the second hour in the morning, so as to reach Balfroosh, the point at which I aimed, by sunrise, if possible, and thus avoid the flies which, I did not doubt, were on the way. In the mean time I have taken up my quarters under a walnut tree in the ruined inclosure of Meerza Buzoorg, overgrown as it is with the rankest beds of the "four o'clock flower," or "marvel of Peru," full six feet high, mingled with the dwarf elder, a shrub which covers half the country. It has all very much the feel and aspect of a noisome church-yard; but I have spread my carpet on a little bit of green turf, and shall do well enough till the hour of marching. Here I shall close for the present: my next shall commence, please God, from Balfroosh.

LETTER XVI.

Balfroosh. — Mushedee-sir. — A contrast. — Izzut Deh. — Mazunderan. — Travelling therein. — Mazunderanees. — Enter Ghilân. — Rood-e-Ser. — Fair day. — Costume, Ghilanee. — Talish. — Lankerood. — Plague. — Lahajân. — Dilapidation. — Arrival at Resht.

Balfroosh, 24th August.

We loaded about the time proposed, namely, two hours after midnight, and then started with a guide. Our way lay across a pretty open country, with a tolerable road; but the distance was twenty-four miles good, and our horses were much fatigued, so that we did not reach Balfroosh till past nine in the morning. We had some difficulty in getting lodged, for the governor, to whom I had letters, had gone to the Prince at Saree; his deputy was at his village, and there seemed no small risk that I should be thrown upon a caravanserai. The alternative was the empty house of the deputy, which I was induced to take possession of, pending his return; nor did I repent the step, as he proved to be a right good fellow, very honest, communicative, and intelligent.

Balfroosh had suffered, as I soon discovered, like the rest of the country, from the same causes, and probably much in the same proportion, though the traces of misfortune were not at first so obvious. We entered the town by a route which I well knew, passing the lake and its island with the Baugh-shah

palace, of which you may remember a drawing. All this appeared to be in good order. The *Maidaun*, or plain between the city and the lake, was overgrown, it is true, with the eternal dwarf elder; but cows in abundance were grazing amongst it, and people from the country were flocking in on all sides with articles for sale. On entering the long bazâr which opens on this plain we saw ruins, indeed—but where is the city in Persia which has them not? There were many of the shops unoccupied and closed; but, though I did not remark so great a bustle as of yore, there was no apparent deficiency of population or of the marks of human life. It was not until I began to walk about and examine—till I had seen and visited, and conversed with some of the merchants, that I began to comprehend the true state of the case.

In my former travels in these countries I have stated, as I think, that the cities of Mazunderân and Gheelan have no resemblance to those of upper Persia. The latter may be observed from a great distance, marking the plain with their walls and houses, and ruins of mud; and the gardens and orchards, which often surround them, serve but to make them more distinguishable from the surrounding plain, or, as they call it, *Sahrah*. In the cities of these provinces the case is quite different. The trees and orchards, instead of acting as an index, serve only, by their quantity, to shroud the houses and streets from view by blending with the foliage of the surrounding jungle. Thus when approaching any city, or town, or village of Mazunderân, unless, like Saree, it be walled, you have no means by

which to judge of its extent, or indeed to know that there is a city at all, unless you stumble upon its bazâr. The rest consists of numbers of houses built of wood or sun-dried brick, with wooden tile-covered roofs, surrounded by and mingled with trees, and connected with each other by a few lanes. Thus all I could by possibility know of the present state of Balfroosh, was from the reports of its own people; but these reports were frightful—formerly the population was said to amount to three hundred thousand souls, this had now been reduced to scarcely thirty thousand. The first may have been exaggerated, the latter hardly; and of this awful defalcation, the greater part is attributed to the plague.

It was remarkable that, in speaking of this scourge, the inhabitants of each scene of its ravages claimed in turn the sad distinction of having been the most heavily visited. It was a melancholy pre-eminence, but I suspect the palm, or rather the cypress wreath, must be awarded to the provinces of Mazunderân and Gheelan in general—always excepting my poor friends of Shameerzad, who were decimated the wrong way, nine out of ten at least having been taken. But Balfroosh had to contend with other calamities. The zenith of its glory had been reached already when I was there before in 1822. Commerce was then the life and soul of the place, and it was doomed to see a part of that commerce depart for the bazârs of Resht, its rival in Gheelan. Till that time the trade and produce of Russia found their way chiefly to its port; but the Russian traders discovered that the silk of Gheelan afforded a better return for their merchandise than the pro-

duce of Mazunderân or the money of its merchants; and so, many vessels that used formerly to cast anchor at Mushedee-sir, the shipping port of Balfroosh, now go to Euzellee.

Besides this, the Russian trade in the Caspian has experienced a material diminution, not only because much of it now goes direct through Teflis from the fair of Maccarief to Tabreez, but a great deal of it is superseded altogether by the increased importations of English and French goods by the routes of Constantinople and Trebizond. By all these gradual changes Balfroosh has suffered materially—it is the human lot, and to murmur is vain. They have also had to bear a new infliction—that of princes and royal governors, from which they were long exempt, and who failed not in performing their locust-like offices. The cholera, which handled it pretty roughly, preceded the still more deadly plague; but last year the city was assailed by a phenomenon which threatened to complete the work of destruction. Here, as throughout the greater part of both provinces, the inhabitants prefer the water of wells to that of the rivers and streams, and almost every house is furnished with one for domestic purposes. Last winter there came a storm of snow so tremendous, as had not been known in the memory of man. I heard Manoocheher Khan, the governor of Resht, himself declare, that it snowed for three days and nights incessantly, until the snow lay three yards deep in the courts of the houses, and they could scarce keep open the communication between one house and another. There was then a temporary cessation, he said, after which

it recommenced, and there was a fresh fall of equal duration; but a thaw having commenced it melted below as much as it increased above, so that the depth, though it did not diminish, was not increased. In Balfroosh, whether from the sudden melting of the snow, or some other undiscovered cause, the whole wells of the place took suddenly to overflowing, and the water rose in some parts of the city to such a height, that the inhabitants were in imminent danger of being drowned. The walls of the houses being built of raw bricks, or clay, began to give way, and the whole city would soon have become a heap of mud had not some wiser heads than the rest suggested the cutting a trench to the river Bâwul. The inhabitants turned out with good will. The trench was soon cut, the water gradually ran off, and the city, sorely maltreated, was saved.

From all this you will comprehend that my visit to Balfroosh was not of the most enlivening description. Almost every person I knew before was gone. To every inquiry about an old acquaintance the answer was sure to be the same. "Ah! he is dead—carried off by the plague." It was the same when I began to walk about. The best buildings were in ruins, for their owners were dead. The splendid garden-house of the Baugh-shah, one of the memorials of the magnificent Abbas, which when I visited it formerly was tolerably perfect, was now going fast to decay—a process soon completed in this moist climate, where every building crumbling into a heap is, in a year or two, overgrown with rank vegetation. The lake was little more than an empty hollow, with a water-lily swamp here and there. This,

though chiefly attributable to the dry season of the year, added strongly to the apparent dilapidation of the place; and as I stood again upon the spot where, twelve years before, I had taken my drawing of the beautiful scene, and sat under the fine weeping willow which I had taken some pains to depict, but which, like the rest, had fallen from its palmy state, a sensation of sadness and heart-break came over me, and I wished myself far from the place. Nevertheless, there were one or two persons who did recognize me, and I cannot tell you how much it pleased me to be accosted by one man in particular, who, with others, had carried me to a garden near the city to spend an afternoon. A pleasant one it was, I well remembered, for all were willing to please and to be pleased. But my friend was now the only survivor of that party—the rest were in their graves.

Having made all requisite inquiries at this place, it became necessary to decide upon my subsequent course. To avoid the heats of the low country, I had thought of mounting again to the yeilâks; but the severe work which that would have entailed on my poor horses, with miserable food and much exposure, as well as the dreadful plague of flies to which, in passing through the jungle, they would always be subjected, frightened me, so I gave up this aspiring plan and made up my mind to go by the sea-coast, where the path is at least level, the air refreshed by sea-breezes, and corn and grass plentiful, as I was assured, in every one of the numerous villages. In truth, I began to be weary of constant fatigue of body and mind, and sought no-

thing so earnestly as the rest which, duty performed, I looked forward to at Tabreez.

25th August.—Mushedee-sir—the shipping port of Balfroosh. Last night my honest host, and a friend of his, kept me up late by a singularly wild metaphysical disquisition, which would have been worth taking down for the strangeness of its flights. I was no match for them, for it required a greater command of the language than I possess to reply suitably to their questions and propositions; luckily, they were so eager that I had little room to edge in a word, so I sat and listened while I should have been sleeping. This morning, however, I was in the saddle about four, and reached Mushedee-sir, about twelve miles' distance, a little after seven. It is a straggling village on the back-water of the Bawul river, which here finds its way to the sea; and has obtained its name, "the martyred head," from being the place where a saint, Imaumzadeh Ibrahim, brother of Imaum Reza, the eighth Imaum, had his head cut off by the Arabs when in possession of these countries.

Our road lay through a string of *muhulehs*, or groups of houses, half hid among trees of elm and oak, willow, poplar, sycamore, hornbeam, fig, &c., on almost every one of which mantled a grape-vine, with a foliage still richer than the supporting tree. Much of the ground was laid out in gardens, patches of mulberry, cotton, melons, rice, &c.; but much, too, is waste, and only covered with a rank growth of dwarf elder, fern, brambles, and thistles, which have overwhelmed the sweet grass that would otherwise clothe the ground. Alder of noble size occupies the

place of other trees, in the marshes, and on the sides of the *Moordábs*, or back-waters of the rivers.

On our arrival at Mushedee-sir, I was at a loss to discover a proper lodging place, and applied for information to a Moollah who was sitting with one or two other persons in an enclosure. But the holy man's hospitality was not warm enough to induce him to rise; so, after several impertinent questions, he contented himself with pointing in a rude enough way to an empty shed, called a *tekieh*, used for the solemnities of the Mohurrum, where he informed me I might take up my quarters, and there accordingly, it being the only shade I could obtain, I spread my carpet. In the afternoon this personage came to see me, that is, to gratify his curiosity, which had been excited by seeing my horses and baggage arrive after me; but he came with such an air of self-importance that I paid him little attention. Of this he complained, and it ended in my producing some papers which caused him to lower his tone, and we became tolerable friends.

A little afterwards I went across the back-water to see the sea-shore, for the sound of the waves booming on the beach came with a pleasant murmur on my ear. On traversing a little bit of ground, half jungle and half garden, which surrounded a cottage, we were met by an old man coming out of it with some fruit in his hand that looked like peaches. To my inquiry whether they were peaches, he replied by frankly putting them in my hands. I thanked him, and asked if he could tell me where I might purchase some for use on the road. "Come with me and we shall see," said the old man, lead-

ing the way to a part of the garden where there were a number of trees of a sort called the *pushmálloo*, or woolly peach, growing in a mulberry patch. He pressed me to pull the ripe ones, and when at length I excused myself on the plea of having eaten enough, he still continued plucking them for me. "I had some fine *hoolloos*" (a better sort of peach) "till yesterday," said he, "but I gave them all away, and I am sorry for it for your sake; see—here are the trees all bare. I give these to any one who likes to take them—why should I not do so? they are all from the bounty of God." I replied, as indeed I thought, that God could not have trusted his gifts to a better steward, and expressed my satisfaction at seeing a person so benevolent, in circumstances which apparently might enable him to exercise his kindness of disposition. He thanked God, he had no reason to complain; and, making some further pious and humble remarks, went on to point out the various trees he had planted, and the vines and the oranges he had trained. The latter had all been killed, he said, by the snow of the previous winter. "It was God's will," he said. "God made them grow, and he has destroyed them.—God is great!" And thus he conducted me to the sea-side, conversing with a simplicity and kindliness of heart which would have delighted you as it did me. He asked me much about myself, and inquired whether in my country there was such a thing as the sea? The gaze which he fixed on me had a still deeper interest when I told him that I had been for six months at a time upon another and greater sea than that of Mazunderân, and most of

that time out of sight of land. He then inquired where I had made my munzil, and, on hearing it, urged me to remove and be his guest that night. I excused myself upon the plea of intending to depart at midnight. "Well, well," replied he with true courteous feeling, "be it as you please; but you should have been very welcome, and I should have been very glad to have had your company." We parted with mutual kind wishes; and, as I returned to my tekieh, I could not help contrasting the behaviour of this kind old man with that of the churlish Moollah; a green spot it was to rest on in the waste of selfishness and rapacity with which I had been long surrounded.

The air here was certainly cooler than at Amol or Balfroosh; there the thermometer stood at eighty-four to eighty-five degrees in the day-time, seventy-five at night within doors. I did not try it here, but to the feel it was far less oppressive, and we had cloudy weather. But it is not the mere heat that is so distressing in Mazunderân; it is the great humidity, the want of elasticity in the air, which weighs upon the breast, and produces a sense almost of suffocation that is very uncomfortable: the perspiration is not carried off by evaporation, but remains clinging about the person like the mists about the hills, and everything you touch is moist and clammy. Bengal in the rains, Demerara in the wet season, Bombay in the monsoon—these were the recollections that suggested themselves to my mind; yet I think Mazunderân far more unpleasant than either, for the afternoons of Bengal and Bombay were fresh and pleasant when the rain was

passed, and I do not remember the same sense of suffocation in Demerara or Berbice. But then, indeed, both body and spirit were more elastic in themselves; they had not been so hardly trodden down in those days by the heavy foot of this rough-trotting world.

26th August.—The difficulty of procuring a guide detained us till nearly half past two this morning. Last night an old man came and presented me with some fine melons. I gave him in return a piece of silver, which so much exceeded their value, and his expectations, that he swore he would go with us anywhere—he would act as guide to Gheelân if we pleased; but as darkness came on, his heart or his courage cooled, for he came very late to excuse himself, not having been able, as he said, to catch his yaboo, so we had to bribe another man.

The night air came cool and pleasant off the waters, and as the sands of the beach were here hard and smooth, we trotted on with speed and comfort. As we passed the *muhulchs*, or divisions of villages, in the early morning, we saw the sea covered with hundreds of little fishing canoes, having each a single man, running out to visit his nets—a pleasant, lively scene. These nets are stretched from the shore to a distance of a hundred yards or so, right out into the sea, so that they catch the passing fish as our stake-nets do. We saw the gleam of a fish struggling in one of them, and the guide went into the water and brought it out. It was a bright white fish, covered with small scales, some fifteen inches long, with a sharp nose resembling a fish called in Guiana the snook. Its belly

was large and fat, and it was evidently in season. They here call it *Mahee Sufeed*, or the *white* fish, to distinguish it from the white or rather grey mullet, which comes on shore and is caught in winter. I purchased some of these fish, which are the only ones taken at this time of year. One of them I had dressed for breakfast, and it ate very well, though rather dry. In about a month more, salmon comes into season, and is caught pretty abundantly. We reached our resting place, one of my old Munzils, Izzut-deh, thirty-two miles distant, by an ugly bit of road through the swamps and jungles,—a specimen of the country which I could have excused,—and took up our quarters under the shade of a tree on the bank of a stagnant river. This was all very well while the sun shone, and we ate our melons with great *goût* in this pleasant bivouac. But in the night came a visitor, not new to this country, in the shape of a heavy shower, which drove me from my bed to the lee of the tree in my "Mackintosh" cloak.

Our marches now resembled one another so much, that a particular description of each day's journey is unnecessary; but a sketch of the country, and our general mode of travelling on the banks of this fine inland sea, may not be disagreeable to you. Mazunderân and Gheelân are, you know, but strips of low ground on the shore of the Caspian Sea, lying at the foot of that huge chain of mountains which support on the north the plateau of upper Persia. Being formed by the *detritus* carried down by the rains and rivers that furrow their sides or pierce them through, they constitute an alluvial for-

mation of rich and deep soil, or beds of gravel, and sometimes both commingled, which has at all times been covered with dense forests and rank vegetation. The towns and villages to be found in these jungles, as I have already observed, are never seen in a collected form, but are composed of groups scattered at will in spots selected according to the owner's taste and wants, and which are approached or have communication with one another by paths so very intricate that a stranger would never detect them, and which in winter and spring are impassable to any but the inhabitants themselves. These difficult and swampy situations had of course their origin in motives of security; but there are other reasons for permitting their villages to be thus overgrown with wood. A vine is planted at the root of almost every tree, and climbs its bole, mantling over it with a rich but rank-looking foliage. This may suit the owner's purpose, which is to have a crop of grapes without expense or trouble; but it is a vile system, as the vines, never being pruned, degenerate and bear small sour grapes, scarcely superior to the wild ones: whereas were the jungle cut, and the vines regularly cultivated, their produce might be abundant in quantity, and good in quality.

But the produce, *par excellence*, of Mazunderân, is rice—that of Gheelân, silk; all other is adventitious, and little regarded. And though the best fruits are indigenous to these provinces, the inhabitants scarcely think of planting a tree to produce good fruit for themselves or their families. Even the principal agriculture of the countries—that of rice and mulberry—is carried on in a most slovenly manner. For

though they fully comprehend the use and value of irrigation, the system of application is so wasteful and ill contrived, that the flooding is not confined to the fields prepared for receiving it, but the whole country, with its roads and pathways, is frequently rendered impassable by being laid under water. Nor is their method of laying out the land for cultivation, and fallowing, or manuring, a whit better; for at least five sixths of the surface appear to be waste, covered only with thorns, and brambles, and rank weeds.

Certainly, I never saw, nor can I imagine, a stronger or more impracticable country, in a military point of view, than these provinces. Roads—that is, made roads—there are none, except the great causeway, made of old by Shah Abbas, and this has now so nearly disappeared, that it requires a guide to find it. And, even when found, it would be useless for military purposes, from the numerous breaks and gaps in its course, and from the impenetrable jungle which surrounds it on all sides, and affords cover for all sorts of ambuscades and surprises. The surface, where not cultivated, consists of natural or artificial swamps, overgrown with forest trees and thorns, particularly bramble-bushes of incredible luxuriance, and perfectly impervious. Indeed, these brambles are called by the inhabitants the "*Pchlewanhâ Mazunderânee*," that is, the heroes, or guardians of Mazunderân, and well do they deserve the appellation.

Above this flat space tower the mountains, assuming the appearance of two ranges, the first of which is clothed with forests as dense as those be-

low, and which throw forward spurs and shoulders that sometimes reach the coast. Beyond this wooded and buttressed wall, which is traversed in all directions by the most wild and romantic glens, and which forms a sort of velvet lining to the principal range, the peaks and masses of this last are seen rising in naked, rocky grandeur, and snow-spotted even in September. It is in ascending these that you meet with the most desperate passes or *cot,huls*, and amongst their recesses, and even on their summits, as well as on those of the wooded hills below, are found the *yeilâks*, or summer quarters, to which the inhabitants resort in the heats of that season. The whole of these wooded mountains are pervaded by paths and passes so intricate, that none but an experienced guide can find his way from one place to another; but the long winding tracks that lead through these skirts and the low plain are equally perplexing and more difficult, following, as they do generally, the windings of streams and rivers that keep to no particular bed, and involving the traveller in swamps, creeks, and quicksands, against which, as they shift with every flood, no experience can guard. It is these dense jungles and swamps which are the birth-places of all the ill health and disease, the hosts of flies, insects, and reptiles, with all the other abominations that infest Mazunderân.

The beach which bounds this flat is a strip of sand and gravel, thrown up by the wash of the surf, which is driven against the southern shore with great violence by the prevailing wind from the north. In truth, the whole coast is lined by a chain of sand-hills, rising sometimes from twenty-five to

thirty feet in height, and 200 yards in breadth, behind which lies a morass of stagnant water from the numerous streams and rivers that, descending from the mountains, are prevented by these sand-hills from finding their way into the sea. Wherever a river does force its way through them there is a continual battle between it and the surf, which latter throws up a bar that shuts up the channel entirely, so that its waters will accumulate and spread behind the sand-hills for miles, sluggish and dead, and only finding their way to the sea by filtration, or very small streams beneath the sand, until a flood enables it to sweep bar and all before it. It is by these stagnated waters, or *moordábs*, (dead waters,) as the natives call them, that the lakes and harbours of Salian, Enzellee, Lankerood, Mushedee-sir, Asterabad, and others, have been formed.

The banks of these dead, or, rather *back* waters, to speak more properly, are overgrown with alders of enormous size, with plane-trees, elms, ashes, poplars, and other trees, which love a moist soil; and in the rainy season the country around is all flooded, so as to exhibit the singular spectacle of a boundless forest in a swamp. Yet scattered among these swamps, behind these *moordábs*, and sometimes between them and the sand-hills, the traveller may find numerous villages, or *muhulehs*, as they are called, clusters of houses inhabited by the cultivators of the rice-fields around. But a stranger would pass a dozen of these, and never suspect the existence of a human being, unless he chanced to see the smoke curling upwards from some of their fires, or

to hear the bark of one of their dogs; and yet from each of these muhulehs there are always more than one pathway, which leads to the sea-beach, for the inhabitants have a considerable traffic, which is carried on by sea; and at certain seasons the people live on fish, salmon, mullets, and other excellent kinds, which come to the coast, particularly in autumn and winter. But for their paths, who, except themselves, could discover them? A dense hedge, a perfect wall of bramble, blackthorn, and thick boxwood, cemented with wild vines and other creeping plants, that run up and overtop the trees, lines the range of sand-hills I have spoken of, where the deep water does not lie. It is of great thickness, often approaches within thirty yards of the water's edge, and usually terminates in one of those swamps and jungles I have described. No one in his senses would be mad enough to attempt to penetrate it; but a guide will show you a "Hole in the wall," a crevice, a thing like a rabbit-run, through which he introduces you to a pathway at first scarcely perceptible, winding like a snake through the bushes, but which increases in size as you get on; not, however, in facility, for it is intersected by at least a dozen of deep natural creeks, through the mire and water of which your horse must flounder; or he may have the choice of a precarious bridge of boughs; or, for variety, after a little space, you may have to thread through artificial cuts, made for irrigation—no less deep and difficult than the natural creeks, as your poor load-horses soon find out, and which flood the whole vicinity, so that you

travel girth deep in the soil; and thus, if you survive, after a circuitous and perilous pilgrimage, you reach the muhuleh, or village.

It was along this beach that we had now to proceed; and in these muhulehs, or close to them, were to be our bivouacs, as it was from them we must procure provisions for man and beast. I have alluded already to my reasons for preferring this road; it was the best in a bad choice, no doubt; but, in addition to its own peculiar inconveniences, we were disappointed in some of the advantages we hoped from it. The sand and gravel were so loose that the horses sunk fetlock-deep at every step, from which their progress became so laborious, that no *cot,hul* would have been more fatiguing. I am persuaded that our marches of twenty-five to thirty miles a day exhausted the poor animals, especially the loaded mules, more than forty or fifty miles of average road would have done. But besides this, notwithstanding all we had heard, there was no procuring suitable forage—that is, straw and barley, such as they were accustomed to—on any terms; and even coarse rice and grass were not always to be had, or in sufficient quantities, at our resting-places; so we were forced to graze them from time to time as we marched, and pick up a little rice in the husk for them at night where and when we could. The consequence of all this—of bad, insufficient food, hard work, intense heat, and occasional assaults of the infernal flies,—was a visible and serious daily falling off of the whole cattle. Their masters were better off in the matter of food at least; the finer sort of rice was

abundant; melons and water-melons generally to be had, and fowls and eggs served in place of other meat. In all our discomforts we had the refreshment of the sea-breeze to temper the sun's wrath when it was fierce, and to dissipate the heaviness of the air when his face was veiled in clouds. In addition to this, there was the pleasure of contemplating a succession of scenery of unspeakable grandeur, and which, if similar in character, was ever varying in form and effect. Mountains in every shape of crag, and spire, and ridge, and precipice, rose to an immense height on the left hand; some clothed in primeval forests, whose rich, deep foliage was just showing the first touches of autumnal tints; others, bare and soaring into the clouds, that rested, as it were, upon their shoulders, as if wearied with the flagging air. Deep mysterious hollows, conjuring up images of unutterable wildness and dread, were contrasted with the occasional glimpse of a village on the verge of a green expanse of rice-fields. On the right was the sea—the ocean it might have been —for the view over its surface was as unbounded— the ever-living, ever-varying ocean, of which I am quite as fond as ever was Lord Byron for his life— far — boundless as is the difference between us. There it lay, stretching out in calm blue majesty, under the ardour of a mid-day sky — or in the splendour of a serene sunset, gleaming

> —— "As when the peacock's neck
> Assumes its proudest tint of amethyst,
> Embathed in emerald glory!"

or, lashed into green and sparkling waves, it broke

upon the shore with hoarse murmurs, well known and ever welcome, like the voice of a familiar friend.

But, to quit this "Ercles vein," there cannot be a more beautiful object than the Caspian Sea, which has a light green tinge, especially in the morning and at sunset, when the hues of the hour, orange and flame colour, or purple and gold, are blended in reflection with its own chaste tint. One morning I was more than usually impressed with the enchantment of this effect. It was a splendid dawn. The sun rose from the sea like a globe of fire, but with a radiance so tempered as to be quite beholdable, among a mass of purple clouds, which now and then flitted across his disk; and the rich orange hue, which seemed powdered over the whole, faded as it rose above the horizon into that indescribable pearly tint which joins such a hue most fitly with the azure above. Amber cloudlets, with rich but tender purple shadows, floated over head, broken into a sort of fleecy, mackerel sky—their edges tipped with a brightness exceeding almost that of the sun himself. Below, the sea, regardless as it seemed of the fiery glory that hung upon it, exhibited a soft blue tone, which contrasted exquisitely with those brilliant hues; but every little wave, which a slight rippling air raised on its surface, reflected from its hollow the gorgeous purple and orange of the East, while the sun itself cast a broad fiery path athwart the whole world of waters down to our very feet.

The cause of this rather singular phenomenon was the breeze which came, scarcely perceptible, from the East, and which, raising a slight curl upon the

water, exposed to us the western side of the wavelet, reflecting the blue of the western sky, while the opposite side and hollow, not sufficiently depressed to be invisible, offered, though less perfectly, to our view, a reflection of the illuminated eastern sky. The powerful light of the sun overcame all other tints, and cast the strong reflection which I have described. You will comprehend this explanation better if you have ever watched the sea while agitated by a brisk breeze, coming from the direction of the setting sun; but let us proceed, or we shall take root upon the beach, and the sun grows hot.

Our custom, while travelling here, was to saddle and load some two or three hours before sunrise—to march for four or five hours, and then, choosing some convenient spot where there was water, and wood, and shade, with pasture for the horses, to halt there for a couple of hours to refresh them and ourselves. I spread my carpet beneath a tree; had water boiled, tea made, and took a comfortable breakfast; the people provided for themselves—generally at my expense—while the horses grazed beside us. We then mounted again, and rode on to our stage for the day, which we reached, according to the length and difficulty of the road, by three, four, or five in the afternoon,—in time to make good our quarters at some village, or on the banks of some stream, where grass was abundant. On the sea-side we were less troubled by the large horse-fly, and though we had mosquitoes enough, they were not so overpowering as I expected to find them. But I had taken precautions against them

by providing a crape veil to tie over my face—a good hint to all travellers; but, indeed, we were such old friends, or rather enemies, that I almost defied their attacks. Fortunately for us, the weather continued dry during nearly the whole of our march to Resht; although, often threatened, we had but two actual heavy showers, and these were both during the night while in bivouac. You should have seen how they made us all scamper: as for me, I do confess that I hate wet in that way almost as much as a cat does. Another advantage of the dry weather was, that we had less of mud on the way, and that the rivers, which in winter and spring are almost impassable, were now all fordable with ease, so that we escaped much danger and much delay in crossing them.

Such was our mode of travelling, with little variety of incident, for the seven days during which we journeyed to my old quarters of Resht. On the third morning, before daybreak, as I was riding in front of my people, who were nodding in their saddles, and lagging in the rear, I came plump upon a black mass, which was scarcely discernible in the moonlight, until close to it. It proved to be seven or eight men, sleeping all in a bunch upon an elevated bank of sand, which commanded two paths, one by the edge of the jungle, and one by the seaside. At my approach they started up, and believing me alone, two of them came forward to seize my bridle rein. The sight of a pistol, which I had drawn on first observing them, cocked and extended for action, caused them to waver and fall back, but they mustered and were obviously meditating an

onset when they were again checked by my people coming up. On this, one of them gave a whistle and a call, which brought seven or eight more, running out of the wood to join their comrades. The affair now looked serious, so I called for my gun, the sight of which, with that of my servants, satisfied them. They clustered together, but made no forward movement. I called aloud to the servants to be watchful, as these people were thieves, and as they moved forward took the rearward myself, to prevent surprise or to repel attack. This, however, seemed now to be out of their heads—they continued gazing at us, but after being hid by the sand-bank, which we crossed, we saw no more of them.

These gentlemen were Abdool Malekees, a tribe of known and professed thieves, who live in the mountains here, and descend in parties to plunder passengers or small caravans. They seldom murder, they only strip people; and had they thought to-day that they were strong enough to make an attempt upon us, we should have had to fight for it; but they do not like to meddle with guns, or horsemen.

On the fourth morning we passed *Sukht-sir* (or Hard-head), a fine bluff point, which terminates a grand range of mountains, the boundary between Mazunderân and Gheelan, and thus I quitted the former province. One would be apt, from my description of it, to imagine that its inhabitants must be a wretched, puny, and diseased-looking race, with frames enfeebled, and little energy either of body or mind; but this is far from being the case. The complexions of the Mazunderances, who remain below the hill during the hot months, are, no doubt,

rather more sallow than those of the men of Upper Persia; but the people themselves are, in general, remarkably stout-limbed and well-formed, with more than ordinarily handsome countenances. In Balfroosh I did observe several dwarfs and deformed children; but this was not the case elsewhere. The children were beautiful, particularly the girls, who were remarkable for a delicacy of feature; and of the women, numbers of whom I saw accidentally both in the towns and villages, many, and almost all the young ones, were handsome.

The intellect of the Mazunderânees has been decried by the rest of their countrymen, as that of the Bœotians by the Greeks, for stupidity and brutality, but I suspect on no sufficient grounds. They are called Mazunderânee *Yaboos*, a nickname which has a double meaning, the province being in reality celebrated for a breed of *Yaboos*, or small horses, which are highly esteemed for their powers of endurance. The peasants are, to be sure, less acute than those of Irâk, who live in villages near the great roads; but I saw no symptoms of extraordinary stupidity. As regarded their own interest they were sharp enough, as we had cause to know; and, certainly, in point of curiosity, they do not fall behind their neighbours. Not a man did we interrogate respecting the road, but he insisted on knowing where we had come from, whither we were bound, and what our business might be—for all the world like our Scotch Highlanders, with their "An' whare may ye be from, sir?" And when we came at night to our *munzil*, we were sometimes cross-questioned with a degree of earnestness which di-

verted me much, and which I sometimes would baffle by assuming an imposing air of mysterious caution, which sadly inflamed the curiosity of the querist. Sometimes, but rarely, were the interrogatories put in a tone approaching to impertinence, calling for reproof; and I generally made good friends in the end, by letting out enough to show them all that there was no mystery whatever, and no concealment intended, except as a joke upon them.

There was one point about these Mazunderânees which I never could understand, and that was their reluctance to guide us on any terms from stage to stage. The demand for a guide was generally made in the evening, soon after arriving at night's quarters. The subject was discussed—a person usually came forward to offer his services, and was desired to name his terms. "Oh, anything," was the general reply, "anything we pleased; he was too glad to serve such as us, were it even for nothing, if such were our pleasure:" this was always suspicious. The villain, we soon found, was laughing at or meditating to deceive us, so he was pressed to name his price, which generally proved exorbitant, on which others came forward, or he himself would come down to a sum which was approved of. This done, the man was directed to hold himself in readiness—to bring his yaboo, if he had one, and himself, if on foot, to the bivouac, and to sleep with the party. Even this was sometimes acceded to;—at other times a promise alone was given. But in either case, when all was supposed to be settled, the fellow would sneak up, generally about midnight, always too late

to open fresh negotiations, and make a thousand excuses, terminating in a declaration that he could not go. Sometimes, the only mode in which this resolution was announced, would be his non-appearance in the morning—thus leaving us unceremoniously in the lurch.

This game was played at every stage between Gilauristook and Resht: sometimes we succeeded in getting a guide; at others, after spending several hours in vain endeavours to procure one, we were forced to go on, at all hazards, without. Now, this conduct did not proceed from any desire to make the most of us at the pinch—to step forward and raise their terms on our distress. The men most commonly went clean off without a word, or, if even a larger sum was offered, would refuse it. Nor could it originate in the fear,—as in Khorasan and Irâk, where I have seen similar tricks played,—of being cheated out of their money by the travellers. Khans, or military men, who press the people and give them nothing, are rare in these parts. No troops pass here, and few nobles who require guides, and the men had always ocular proof at each village, that the guide from the preceding one was honestly and regularly paid. We might, indeed, have imagined that a matter of four shillings, for a day's work, would be a thing eagerly grasped at by men, who, probably, could not earn sixpence a-day. But such did not appear to be the case, and we were quite puzzled to account for their conduct.

As for selfishness and greediness, alas! where are these not to be found? In fact, the people were so obviously resolved to make the most of us, that at

length I resorted to the same expedient which is sometimes practised on the Continent—that of bargaining for what we wanted before unloading. This was sometimes remarkably successful; but there were other instances where the villagers refused to admit or supply us on any terms, and forced us to go on to the next Muhuleh.

To finish with the Mazunderânees: they are generally a quiet, inoffensive race, but brave and good soldiers—excellent marksmen with their matchlocks: and the twelve or fourteen thousand men furnished by this province to the King's army are among the most trusted and trustworthy it can boast of. It is said that the present King, or probably rather his uncle, the late Aga Mahomed Khan, used in times of real danger to sleep surrounded by the *Karachoghees*, or black-garmented men of Larijoon and the neighbouring districts, whom he called *Peerahun-e-tun-e-Shah*, "the shirt of the King's person."—Do you remember the boast of my boasting guide from Boojnoord?

The costume of Mazunderân in this hot weather, as we met the men moving about, was generally a pair of blue cotton drawers, with a shirt of the same, or of common white calico; a rough hair cap, or oftener one made of chintz, stitched and ornamented according to the wearer's means; an *ulkáluk*, or vest, more usually slung over the shoulder on a stick than worn on the person. The same stick supports a wallet of grass or reeds containing necessaries: or, if the person were going to market, crammed with whatever he may have to sell. In their right hand, or stuck in their girdle, they all

carried a bill-hook of steel, to cut their way through the jungle. This is the common peasants' only arm, for Mazunderân is in itself a peaceable country; but without this weapon he could scarce make his way through his friends and guards the Pehlewans, *i. e.* the brambles. The better classes wear the usual Persian dress.—And so farewell to Mazunderân.

It was on a sweet and pleasant morning, the last of August, after a night which soaked us with rain, that we got well into the country of Gheelân, and reached its first town, Rood-e-sir. The mountains here fall back from the sea; the jungle diminishes; the country becomes more open; and there was less of that sense of suffocation which constantly oppressed me in Mazunderân. The air was soft and springy; there were space and sky, and sea and light, about us. The soul had elbow-room, and the spirits gambolled as it were in their freedom from constraint. Have you not felt this mental change on a transition from gloom and confinement to freedom, air, and brightness?—The sands were flatter and harder—we marched in greater comfort—and the beach, as we passed along, was crowded with groups of peasantry all dressed in their holiday clothes, wallet on shoulder; for it was a periodical fair-day at Rood-e-sir, and all the world was flocking to it.

As we approached the scene of action, there were temporary huts of branches and grass scattered all over the beach, like booths at a race-course at home, in which various articles of refreshment were sold, or a petty traffic was carried on. Heaps of sweet and water melons lay upon the shore tempting the passers-by, while their owners directed attention to

them by praising their sweetness and flavour—often suiting the action to the word, and adding example to precept, by swallowing a huge morsel of one of them cut up for the purpose. All was movement and bustle. The magnates and elders of the villages bestrode their yaboos, some carrying their wives *behind* them, others their children *before* them. Many women were seen riding single, attended by a man who drove their ponies on—a sign of high or low rank, as the case might be; for the man was sometimes the husband, sometimes a menial. These ladies often wore their *roo-bunds*, or veils, up, for air, until they saw a stranger drawing near, when they would hurry it down. But I observed that this was in general more rapidly performed by the elderly ones, while *sometimes* the young and pretty would experience some difficulty in adjusting this shroud, so as to let a pair of bright eyes, or a pretty mouth, be seen. But I must do the Persian women the justice to say that this concealing of the countenance is so much a matter of course, and so entwined with ideas of propriety and modesty in their minds, that rarely indeed do you see a decent female, however retired the spot, neglect for a moment the natural movement which covers her face on the approach of a stranger.

As we drew near to Rood-e-sir the crowd increased; and for the first time we observed the smarter Gheelânee, or Talish costume, mingling with the more sober garb of Mazunderân, which we were leaving behind; though the dress of the low country peasantry of Gheelân differs little from that of the sister province. The Tâlish Highlander, like the

Georgian, wears a tunic of some gay colour, open down the breast, tight round the waist, and reaching to the knee with full skirts. But these are often trussed into a pair of wide *shulwars*, or drawers, tied tight round the ankle, but the bulk of which above, set the lower man sometimes in strange contrast with the tight-drawn, slender waist, and broad shoulders. In absence of this expansive garment its place is supplied by a dark-coloured pair of trousers, easy from the waist to the knee, but tight to the shape below it. This is Georgian and Lesghee, I believe. A shirt of red or blue silk, seen to advantage through the open-breasted tunic,—a skull cap, sometimes conical, of bright-coloured chintz or shawl with much needle-work,—and a *cummeh*, or Georgian dagger, hanging at the waist, complete the dress of these swashers, who are commonly followers of some noble of the country.

We observed here an uncommon sight; several unveiled women in gay and singular dresses—and pretty too; but I could not learn who they were; and there was a whole encampment of Kaleballee-banloos, the worst and most thieving tribe of gipsies, pitched close to the entrance of the town. The town itself, when we reached its little bazâr, was as gay as the Persian costume and the whole display of goods in every shop could make it; and if not a very imposing, it was at least a pleasing sight. It was Sunday too, and by a small stretch of imagination one might have imagined one's self in a country village at home, with all the world flocking to church. But the illusion would soon have been dissipated; for, instead of "the sound of the church-going bell,"

the ear was startled by the *rout* of a Dervish's horn; and the loud cackling laugh of the younger folk had nothing in common with that decent solemnity which prevails with us on such occasions. As for dervishes, I never saw such a collection; if there was one, we saw more than a hundred at the bazâr, and going to it; — the elders, or *peers*, surrounded and followed by their *mooreeds*, or disciples.

Here we breakfasted, and then took leave of the sea-shore, striking into the country on the *sungfursh* or causeway (literally, stone carpet) of Shah-abbas to get to Lahajân, another town where we meant to halt for the night; but such was not our destiny. We missed our way,—an easy matter in Gheelân, and lost so much time before we could recover it, that we thought it prudent to halt for the night at Lenkerood, a small town about eight miles distant from Rood-e-sir, and only half way to Lahajân. It had been a place of consequence before the plague, but was quite depopulated by that disease, so that I saw little but ruins and a miserably-filled bazâr, with one caravanserai, where merchants lodged who came from a distance on purpose to purchase silk. As for us, we put up in the verandah of a neat mosque, where I had no sooner settled myself than a host of inquirers, all idlers in the place, came pounce upon me, reiterating a thousand silly questions, until I was forced to silence some of them by a few sharp replies; nevertheless, there were some persons in the crowd, — traders whom speculation had brought there,—from whom I obtained some useful information.

The country about Lankerood is more open than

most parts of Mazunderân, and the sheets of rice and mulberry gardens would do one's heart good, were it not for the deadly swamps and stagnation of air which they cause. There is no want of jungle either, as we experienced both in entering and leaving the town, for next morning, as we proceeded towards Lahajân, though we could not well miss our way, we had such a battle with the jungle flies as our horses will not forget, or I am mistaken. No wonder that illness should abound—that plague should be so fatal when it once finds its way into these dens of filth and moisture; the wonder is, that it should ever leave the country; and yet, I believe, at least three years have passed since it ceased completely in Gheelân, and Mazunderân, and generally in Persia.

We breakfasted in Lahajân. It once boasted of fifteen thousand inhabitants. What it now contained I know not, but I rode through streets tumbling into ruins, overgrown with rank weeds, and through a bazâr, where, as a man observed to me, "the grass was growing in the shops:" and, indeed, there it was growing thickly on the place where the merchants used to sit, and peering forth from under the sills of the closed doors. The place was liker a charnel-house than a town. But trade—your love of gain—is a great re-peopler, and the silk of Gheelân is an irresistible temptation. The former inhabitants had passed away, it is true, but others were already flocking to the place, and in no long time the bazârs of Lahajân, as well as of Lenkerood, will be refilled with bustling merchants. To-day was a market day, and the market-place was tolerably crowded, but the rest of the streets were so empty that, on

leaving it, I could scarcely find a person to direct me on the way to Resht.

The march from Lahajân to Resht was long and tedious. The way lay through dense alder copses or forests of the same trees overgrown with grape vines, or rice fields and swamps of grass; but there was not nearly so much water or so much difficulty as when I passed by this road before; and as for the Suffeed-rood, which then was such a wide boiling flood, and which we crossed with so much peril and delay, our horses forded it a clear stream, scarcely belly-deep. One thing painfully and constantly attracted my observation, and that was the rapid progress of decay, even since my last visit, of all that then remained of solid and useful for facilitating the progress of the traveller. The last traces of the causeway of Shah-abbas were fast disappearing; its capital bridges built of brick and mortar, worn at length through the very archways, were clumsily mended by thrusting a log of wood into the holes, or throwing a plank across them; and in many parts a single shower of rain would suffice to cut off communication entirely between one place and another. This very day, dry as the weather has been, you would be astonished, could I describe to you the long tracts of mud and water through which, more than girth-deep, we rode our horses, often at the hazard of sticking altogether. Now, until the plague came, Gheelân was considered to be in a highly thriving condition; and its governor, Manoocheher Khan, is assuredly one of the most sensible men and best rulers in the service of the Shah. But such is the genius of Persia, daily bread is all they look to, repairs for the day are all they ever make; nothing

is ever done until necessity compels, and then only enough to meet the immediate call; the future is left to take care of itself;—that excellent aphorism of our boyhood, "a stitch in time saves nine," is unknown to the sages of Persia.

A single instance of solid improvement I did observe, which looked absolutely absurd from its inconsistence with the general ruin. A well-constructed bridge was in progress over the *Shemeerood* river—at whose expense I could not learn—but it is to be hoped the public-spirited individual may live to complete his work, as otherwise, however far advanced, it will be abandoned to decay.

The sun had almost set before my weary cattle could complete their journey; day after day they had fallen off in strength and flesh, and two of my people were this day dismounted,—their beasts could hardly walk alone—so much for hard work, heat, and starvation. As I passed along, my eye fell on more than one familiar spot, and many of the buildings stood there which of yore were readily remembered. But either my memory was treacherous or great changes had occurred; perhaps there was something of both, for I have had abundant proof of late how petty localities may be effaced from the recollection. When we entered the town it was too late to seek for a private lodging, so I went to a caravanserai for the night. In the morning, the vizier or lieutenant of Manoochehr Khan appointed me a lodging, the Khan himself not having, as I hoped he might have done, yet reached Resht. It is from that lodging, and from the scene of my old persecutions, that I now indite these lines.

LETTER XVII.

Resht.—Decay and dilapidation.—Illness.—Leave Resht.—Fomer.—A night march in Gheelan.—Massoulah.—Fevers.—Magellan.—Gheelewân.—Shawl.—Khummus.—Insolent demand.—Persian manners.—Herow.—El hineck.—Toork.—Threshing floor and harvest.—Toorkomanchai.—Sick servants.—Push for Tabreez.—Persian quarantine.—Reach Tabreez.

DEAR ——, September 5th, Resht.

I HAVE been four days here, but have little to tell you, and nothing, I think, that is not painful. Resht, like the rest of Gheelân, is but the ghost, or rather the scarcely animated skeleton of what it was. The first morning after my arrival, two persons, one of whom had known me of old, came to call. When I inquired of this person about my old friends, his answer was, "Ask about no one, for no one remains." "Well, but if my friends are gone, I want to see or hear of their relations, their descendants, sons, brothers."—"There are none remaining—all are gone."—"But their houses,—I want to see my old haunts—the places where I used to sit and converse, when I was a guest, with the owners—where people were kind to me."—"They, too, are gone,—all are in ruins,—you would not know the places; and if you think of going to walk by the water side as you used to do, don't attempt it, for you won't recognize a single spot; all is waste or overrun with jungle."

These were rather lowering accounts, but they were nearly correct; and as I passed through the deserted streets and environs, I remembered the words of Outalissi,—

> " Their echoes and their empty tread,
> *Did* sound like voices of the dead."

I went and walked through the bazârs. This is the season for purchasing, sorting, and sending off the silk, and many of the caravanserais were filled with merchants employed in these pursuits, so that it was rather a lively and busy scene. Before each cell or chamber, there is a sort of balcony or open space where people sit under the shade of the projecting roofs; and these were crowded with persons examining the large skeins of silk, picking out the knots and roughness, and moulding them into the proper shape for being packed. But these were all strangers; scarcely was there one Gheelânee. The vacuum created by pestilence had already attracted an influx of foreigners. The silk trade of Gheelân, as I before remarked, is too tempting a bait, not to entice in defiance of the disease and death that may lurk beneath it. But in the great bazâr which I had once seen so thronged the case was different—half, nay, two-thirds of the shops were shut up, and the rest were either occupied by petty silk-dealers, or by hucksters of chintzes and piece goods, and the common productions of the country. There was little remaining of the bustle I so well remembered; in the streets scarce a soul or a sound. I inquired for some of the manufactures for which the place was famed —there were none to be had—the manufacturers had been swept away. In fact, when once the plague

found its way into a house in Gheelân it seldom left a living creature in it; it disposed of the whole family. When I was in Resht before, it contained certainly more than sixty thousand people; the account now varied from fifteen to twenty thousand, strangers included; but even of this there was no certainty.

You may remember hearing, that in my former journey I cured a boy of a wound inflicted by a butcher's lad, and that the relatives of the butcher were very grateful to me for having saved him and them from the consequences of the murder. The butcher and all his relatives were gone. Old excellent Hajee Moollah Baba, who had given me counsel and help when they were much needed, and who had as kind a heart as ever filled a human breast, was also gone. The young man who had been wounded by the charge of a gun going through his hand,—a desperate business, and for whom I had done what I could, but whom I had left in a very precarious way, —had recovered of his wound—I had the comfort to hear that—but, alas! he too had afterwards been swept away. The only other one of my former acquaintances who remained, was my old Mehmandar Hajee Meer Ismael, now governor of the town. Ever cold and haughty, he received me with civility, but little apparent feeling,—indeed at first he did not recognise me. He confirmed the account of death and depopulation which others had given me, but he was equally uncertain with regard to its present number of inhabitants.

I had but small opportunity to make many further inquiries or remarks; for on the second day after my arrival, the weather, which had for two months

past been fair and even scorchingly dry, broke up; and the clouds, which ever since my leaving Balfroosh had been sailing about over head, hither and thither, coquetting with the mountain tops, now came bodily down, enveloping them in a livid shroud, and bursting in heavy showers all over the country. The second night a long-continued downright pour, betokened that the rain was in earnest; and from that time till now we have never seen the sun—scarcely have had a fair hour. This is alarming, for there is no saying how soon the roads may in this way be rendered impassable. The ground is so dry that it will absorb all the rain yet fallen, and the rivers are not yet so swollen as to be unfordable, but I know too much of Gheelânee rivers. Then I have another motive for moving, in the illness of one of my servants—a hint of the effects of Gheelân on strangers at this time. The sick servant is a villain of a cook whom I had parted with the day before he was taken ill of fever and ague; he would not go further. Another shows symptoms of illness—two days more and the rest may be disabled, and myself too; so, *Inchallah, coûte qui coûte*,—rain or no rain,—I start to-morrow. In place of my cook I have got a negro, a real black jewel by his own account; he is called *yahoot*, (ruby,) and is tall and thin enough to make a spare fishing-rod, but in the mean time he concocts my pillaw.

14th September 1834. Tabreez.—*Alhumdulillah! Alhumdulillah!* Thank God, dear ——, here I am at length, safe and sound;—free, though scarcely scathless, from the moist, muggy, villanous Gheelân, with its marshes, forests, and fevers!—I have reached

this place, which now for the third time has been to me a *portus salutis*, a haven of safety and of rest, after a weary pilgrimage. I am among friends and countrymen. I hear familiar sounds, exchange cordial greetings, and enjoy the unspeakable delight of unreserved communication with those who can sympathize with my feelings, whether of grief or joy, and are both able and willing to counsel me with sincerity, or aid me with kindness. I cannot express to you the delight of this relief from that anxious loneliness, that weary and sustained exertion both of mind and body, which has harassed me for these long four months.

I left Resht, as I purposed, on the morning of the 6th instant at nine o'clock, having been detained by the trifles which invariably retard a first march here and elsewhere. A recollection of former difficulties combined with the lowering appearance of the weather, to excite in me an almost nervous anxiety to get clear of the town; for I felt as if there were some spell in it or upon me, which would prevent or impede my progress beyond its precincts; and it was a singular and not very encouraging coincidence that, while crossing the *Sabzee Maidaun*, the very place where I was formerly arrested, I should now be detained by discovering that sundry articles had been left behind at our lodging. It was not without impatience that I awaited the return of the messenger whom we sent back to recover them, nor without a glow of repugnance that I eyed the well-remembered spot; but, as if to cool my hatred, the sky, which had lowered all morning, opened and let down such a pelting shower as would have quenched

the hottest fever—an affusion which did not, I fear, improve my temper when I thought of the rivers we should even this day have to encounter.

At length, however, all was right, and we proceeded, passing many spots which I remembered well in my old adventures here, especially a piece of water called the *Einuc*, to see which had been my pretext for going beyond the town when I made my escape from it twelve years before. Full well too did I remember the river which we then crossed in a cockle-shell of a boat—it was now a roaring torrent, and we passed with no small difficulty. The next river was still more troublesome; not because of its size, but because we had to cross and recross it at least a dozen times on our way to Fomen, a small town which was to be our first stage. We accomplished the whole, however, in safety and in very good time, taking up our quarters in a ruinous mosque so early as to give us hopes of being able to start at midnight on our next day's journey.

This, in a moonless night, and in a country of swamps and jungle, you will probably call a rash, rather than a bold attempt; but I had my reasons —the terrible *khur-mughz* (ass flies). These formidable insects that had assailed us on our entrance into Mazunderân, infested the broad belt of jungle and marsh, full eight miles deep, through which we had to pass, and rendered it almost utterly impassable after sunrise. It was, therefore, important to traverse it before that hour. But as the darkness would have been an almost equally effectual obstacle, we engaged two men carrying torches fed with naphtha to light us on our way in addition to our

guides. Accordingly, a little after midnight the word to load was given, and about half-past one in the morning we moved from our quarters, lighted by our torch-bearers.

Sorely was their assistance needed. The night was as black as pitch, except when the lightning, that flashed from a thunder cloud on one of the distant western hills, occasionally blinded us with its brightness. The way was most intricate, through brush and brake, and swamp and pool; but our guides were sure, and for a while the torches did their duty. But the cloud approached us fast, and at length overshadowed us. The thunder crashed, and a few heavy drops were soon the forerunners of one of the thickest downpours it was ever my fortune to 'bide. In spite of every precaution our torches would scarcely stand it; they burned so dimly that it took all our guides' acuteness to feel out their way. Thus groping, we reached a "bad step"—a bit of deep clayey morass, in which, though my own strong horse floundered through, the first baggage-mule that tried it sunk up to the girths, and there she stuck. The rain came now in such pailfuls, as to set all coverings at defiance; and my "Mackintosh" cloak, from some cause or other, let in the water just as fast as a sieve would have done. The horses, confounded by the rain, and frightened at the thunder and lightning, became restive; and we had every reasonable expectation of seeing our baggage securely stowed away in the bottom of a Gheelânee bog, and the cattle "stabled" beside it.

Nothing but the most strenuous efforts of all hands effected the extrication of the beasts that had

got in; the rest were taken round by a longer but safer path, and joined us on the other side of this miry pit; and it was worth while to see the guides, with torches held aloft, dashing before us up to the breast in the wide pools, seeking out the path with their feet;—bolder fellows never were—they richly earned their hire. Thus did we wade often over the girths, but now on hard bottom, until day-break, by which time we had reached the bed of the Zoodil river, up which our course lay. Sweetly swollen it was, as we had occasion to discover in our numerous crossings, but we could not well be wetter, so that it signified the less.

About 7 A. M. we took a cup of tea and a bit of bread in an *Imaumzadeh*, at the foot of the mountains, which in an hour after we began to ascend. This ascent for a time was gradual, keeping pace with the bed of the stream. The road was all stones of course, and the scenery resembled entirely that which other such mountain passes afford. After following the glen for ten miles or more, the mountains closed in, and we had some desperate rises and plunges over jutting rocks, the stream having burst its way, as it appeared, through the solid mountain for a space of about five miles more. This brought us to the forks of the river, up one of the streams of which we turned, mounting a sharp rocky *cot,hul*, which brought us to the village of Massouleh, one of the most romantically situated and curious places I have seen.

It is built in terraces rising on the almost perpendicular slope of the western mountain, with a tremendous wooded peak towering over it, and a fine

lofty ridge varied with wood, and rock, and pasture, opposite; while a dozen of little streams "descend from their hills" in lines of foam to form the small river beneath the village, which goes roaring away towards the low country. The houses of this village differed entirely both in internal and external appearance from those of any other I had seen. They were, many of them, three stories high, the two upper ones having each two tiers of windows, the one tall, the other low, over each other, which produces rather a lively appearance, resembling European buildings. I was told they are built on the Lesghee model.

The people of Massouleh are all muleteers, or petty merchants, who trade with the neighbouring districts, and between the low and high country; and we had abundant proof of the attention they pay to the main chance. They cultivate no grain, nor indeed anything else except a few vegetables; but they are rich in flocks and herds, as we had occasion to see. Indeed, we observed blue smokes curling up from various spots in the jungle, where the shepherds or cow-herds of the Massouleh proprietors were feeding their charges.

The principal *cot,hul,* or pass, by which travellers reach the highlands of Khal-khal in Azerbijan, rises right behind Massouleh, and a very severe one it is. We started from the very door of our lodging straight up the high cliff that hangs over it, along the bosom of which the path zig-zags; and we followed this toilsome track for an hour and a half before attaining the first landing-place. Here, as there were some tents and log-houses, we breakfasted, procuring

eggs, milk, and wood from their inhabitants, and then recommenced our ascent by a fine valley, that led to another desperate pull. The crest we thus attained is the boundary between Gheelân and Azerbijan, and a hearty welcome did we give the brown arid mountains of the latter, as we looked down upon their confused masses from the top of the *Geddook*. It was a strange highland view,—a powerful, though not to me unpleasant, contrast to that which we had just left; for that, though rich in wood and pasture, was dark in cloud and storm, while the cheerful sunshine that lay before us delighted me as well as my poor servants, who swore they had almost forgotten its colour. We enjoyed it the more too, that the heat was not excessive; in fact, after standing still awhile, a little more warmth would not have been unacceptable, for the tops of the mountains we were about to leave were now fast getting covered with a blanket of thick, woolly clouds, from which such a fierce cold wind poured down as set us all a shivering. One of my servants, who had been threatened with ague in Gheelân, was here taken with a shivering fit, and another told me that he had been suffering in the same way the whole previous night; so there was evidently no time to be lost in descending from our altitudes, and we accordingly made all possible speed to the village of Majillaun, where, though our march was only sixteen or eighteen miles, we halted for the night.

We were now fairly free of Gheelân, with its jungle, and swamps, and forests,—I fain would add, of its fevers, but these, unfortunately, stuck by us; we

hoped, however, that the fresh and bracing air of the Khal-khal yeilâks would drive them also away, and accordingly before daylight on the following morning we were in full march westward. Our way led us across a pretty smart *Geddook*, or sharp ascent, from which we descended into the bed of the Shahrood river. While occupied with the ascent we heard shouting behind us, and presently saw a man puffing and blowing, and running after us, without either cap or coat, and calling on us to stop. He turned out to be our guide of the former day, who, having been out of the way, had not received what I meant for him. We had lodged in his house, and when departing in the morning the present intended for both was given to his father; but the old man had not said a word of the matter to the son on his return, and the latter, therefore, had made this long fatiguing stretch to overtake us and recover his due. You may judge from this trait of the good faith of these folk, and of their poverty, or fondness for money.

On descending into the valley, I saw to the right a village surrounded with trees and gardens, the appearance of which was familiar to my eye. On inquiring its name I found it was *Ghcelcwan*, the first village which I had reached after my escape of old from Ghcelân, and to which also I had been taken back after being made prisoner. Above it frowned the mountain nest of Mahomed Khan Massaul, whither the rogues who arrested my progress forced me to proceed. A little further down the valley was Dees, the village in which I was sleeping when taken, just on the other side of the river I had been forced to wade

barefoot. Well did I recollect the tortuous pathway which led to it among the tuppels or hillocks; I could recognize, it seemed to me, the very spot behind one of them to which the ruffians dragged me to rob, and, as I then verily believed, to murder me. It was a march of strange reminiscences.

We breakfasted at Shawl, a village opposite to Dees, and then continued our way up the banks of the Shahrood river, tracing it to its origin from a number of springs at *Khumus*, a fine, large, thriving village, prettily situated. We had passed several others of no inconsiderable size, but this surpassed them all; and we looked for good fare and comfortable quarters in so promising a place. In this we were not disappointed; but in the hospitality of its inhabitants we were grievously so, for in addition to the most exorbitant charges for corn, straw, and provisions, they made an enormous demand for *lodgings*, a thing I never heard of before. When about to depart in the morning I gave the usual present for use of a stable and the room I occupied, and was just going to mount, when a person, who had not before made his appearance, came forth and intimated to my servants that *he* was the master of the house, and expected *two ducats* (eighteen and sixpence) for my night's lodging. At such a modest demand I laughed of course, and was moving off, when the man again repeated his demand to my people, and hinted that my mules should not depart until it was complied with. My reply to this threat might have satisfied him that he had mistaken his man, but it did not appear so to do; for as I was again turning away to go, he began a tirade of mingled threats and abuse, and seconded

them by laying his hand upon the halter of one of the mules. This was carrying matters too far, so I just stepped up to him, and hinted, in my turn, the probability of his hand remaining longer where it was than he might find convenient, unless he speedily disengaged it. He neither liked my tone of voice nor look, for after another bluster he yielded to the people of the place, who saw that the thing would not do, and the mules were permitted to move off without further trouble. Yet my friend, taking a short cut, met us again at the end of the village and commenced another attack, half whining, half grumbling, in which he was supported by the very persons who had just interfered to prevent his folly, and who now, acknowledging that he had "eaten dirt," entreated me to forgive him, and to bestow upon him a *khelat* for the use of his room. The only reply I gave was to laugh in their faces, and to assure them he had got all the *khelat* he was like to have from me; and away we rode, leaving the rogue looking very foolish at the failure of what he had believed a certain hit. It was certainly the most impudent attempt at imposition by intimidation I ever met with in a Persian village.

The truth is, that, like those of Massouleh and many others on this road, these villagers are all muleteers, and have the tricks and habits of jockeys with the cunning of foxes. Thus they occasionally overreach themselves, for they can't understand fair dealing when they meet it, and so lose bargains. I wanted to purchase a mule from them—for this is a country famous for these animals—but we could come to no terms,—they would not give me a trial

of the animals even upon hire, and *I* could not, of course, buy an unknown, untried animal. I proposed to pay for one of those they offered for sale, all the way to Tabreez, hiring its owner as a guide, and promising to purchase it at a stipulated price, provided it turned out well, and the man agreed, but, as usual, found an excuse to be off before midnight:—all this was very disgusting. But it was the same at Herow, another fine village, or rather town, at which we breakfasted next day, and which is the capital of Khal-khal: a dozen of animals at least were brought to us,—we came to terms half a dozen of times, and then the owners found out some cause for drawing back.

That evening we pushed on to a small village named Elchinek, on the banks of the Serawah river Our road lay over an elevated and waving country, uninteresting, except when peeps into the various valleys afforded views of picturesque villages cradled among orchards, and stuck like nests in clefts of the rocks. We reached the bed of the river by a long descent, and found a few huts grouped together, among which we procured a stable for ourselves and plenty to eat for the horses. But so poor and ignorant were the people, that when I offered them a golden ducat in payment for what we had had, they told us they did not know what it was, and begged for white money.

Our next stage was to *Toork*, a large but ruinous-looking village, twenty-four miles distant. The way lay over a high country of waving hills, with little rock, principally inhabited by the Shaghaghee tribe of Ecliauts, which bears but an indifferent repu-

tation for honesty. The extensive district of Khal-khal, through which our four last days' journey have led us, although very high and mountainous, is far from being so full of stones and rocks as many districts of the Elburz range. Its mountains, though very lofty, are neither very abrupt nor precipitous, and the valleys which divide them, though sometimes narrow at the bottom, spread out above, so that the sides and bosoms of the hills which form them afford a large space capable of cultivation. Even the loftier parts of the mountains are seen covered with *Daimeh* cultivation, that is, corn raised by the natural rain and moisture of the soil without irrigation. This humidity is derived from their own elevation and vicinity to Gheelân, and the clouds and vapours of the Caspian Sea.

Some of the valleys, however, are broad, and comprehend extensive flats, which at this time wore every appearance of having repaid the labours of the farmer by a plentiful harvest, for they presented sheets of fine stubble. In fact, though in the higher regions there was a good deal of barley uncut, and here and there a little still green, the harvest was generally over. The operations connected with securing it would astonish an English or Scottish farmer. The corn, cut with but little regard to economy of straw, is piled at once in small heaps to wait the farmer's convenience. No fear has he of stacks heating, or corn sprouting in the sheaf, for no drop of rain ever falls at this season, and the corn itself is commonly so dry before they reap it, that it might at once be stacked if required. But I never have seen it so stacked, except when, as a

precaution against depredation, it is in some places carried home and piled on the tops or in the court-yards of the houses to wait the time for being thrashed.

But the *khermund*, or thrashing place, is the lively and curious scene. This is generally established on some hard, flat spot, just outside the gates of the village, and hither the sheaves are brought on the backs of cows, bullocks, asses, or yahoos—any animal they can get hold off, and are thrown in heaps, from whence they are again tossed under the feet of a number of the same sort of animals, who, driven round in a circle, *tread* out the corn. This ancient and scriptural mode of threshing is picturesque as well as interesting. A dozen or more of such groups may be seen, some with the slow oxen moving stately round the circle, others with the more lively and unmanageable horses, sometimes at a canter, sometimes at a trot; then kicking and flinging to get free from their confined and irksome course, or with their heads down on the ground endeavouring to snatch a mouthful of the tempting food they are preparing for the use of others; and I believe the Persian strictly obeys the scriptural inhibition of "muzzle not the ox that treadeth out the corn."

On the very same ground the operation is completed by separating the corn from the straw, when there is any wind, with sieve-like machines, such as were used with us before we learned to "make wind for ourselves," like the Lady of Tillitudlem, by means of fanners; and you may see dozens of people thus employed in exposing the mingled grain and chaff to the action of the breeze, while others, with five-

pronged wooden forks, toss the mass about and facilitate the process by freeing it from the grosser parts of the straw. The whole place resounds to the shouts of the drivers and the long-drawn exclamations of the winnowers, as they reply to the directions of the village elders, who, conspicuous with their red henna-dyed beards, are always standing by, or moving round the groups to see the work properly performed. It is a scene of plenty and cheerfulness that is very gratifying; but a really thrifty farmer would mourn over the waste and bad economy with which it is attended, and which is one proof of the abundance that blesses the labours of the Persian agriculturist.

Khal-khal, however, is by no means exclusively an agricultural district. Not only are the villages possessed of large flocks and herds, but the *yeilaks* and *kishlaks* unattached to the large settled villages are pastured by the flocks of Eeliaut tribes, which produce a vast quantity of butter and wool, besides feeding their owners. Indeed I was greatly struck by the similarity of some parts of Khal-khal to certain districts of our own Highlands, where the grazing of sheep has diminished the original quantity of heather, and produced that brownish-yellow tint which is observable towards autumn, and which, especially seen from a distance, resembles that of the rounder and less rocky Persian hills. In quitting this fine district, where, I dare say, you will think I have lingered too long, I must remark, that the peasantry, though they universally exclaimed against the exactions to which they said they were exposed, appeared everywhere thriving and comfortable, and

the villages large, with a look of prosperity, and finely situated, being surrounded with gardens and orchards.

At half past two in the morning of the 12th, we quitted our bivouac under some fruit trees at Toork, and by half past ten reached Toorkomanchai, a village six fursungs on, and famous as the place where Persia signed her last treaty of peace with Russia, after the disastrous war of 1827-8, when the latter took Tabreez, and had advanced thus far towards the capital, and when the former may be said, I fear, virtually to have lost her independence. It was a weary stage, for our guide was constantly betraying us to disappointment, by assurances that we were close to our *munzil* while we were yet fursungs distant, and while our anxiety to reach it was increased by the continued illness of two of my servants. The negro cook, whom I had taken into service at Resht, turned out to have a confirmed fever and ague. I had unluckily engaged him on his *well* day, but every second day since we left it he has been down with his regular fit. At Toork, however, it got so bad that, having some acquaintance in the village, he begged to be permitted to stay there, and we accordingly left him shaking like an earthquake, and roaring like a bull under a pile of great coats and coverings of one sort or other. My Peish-khidmut had been down ever since crossing the Gheelán mountains, and now there was a *nedter*, or groom, taken ill, so that one way or other I was in pretty pickle.

These things made me more anxious to put an end to the journey, and, after some deliberation, I

resolved to leave all the people to come on as they best could, and, taking a guide myself, to push on for Tabreez and send them help. We had come twenty-four miles already, and had from sixty-five to seventy more to accomplish. But though my cattle were sadly done up, I had still one horse fit to work well, and accordingly, at two o'clock, P.M., after a three hours' rest, I started. Had I been a Persian, or regarded omens, I might have been deterred from this step by the number of obstacles that arose to my progress; but anxiety to be with my friends, and at rest, was stronger than them all, and I proceeded slowly, but regularly, first to a caravanserai, called *Dowatgur*, where I fed my horse and ate a few eggs myself, and then marched all night to Shiblee, sorely oppressed by sleep, for this was my second night of wakefulness and journeying. Here I purposed to breakfast, and then to go straight on —but judge of my disappointment at finding that a quarantine station had been established here, to prevent intercourse with the very quarters from whence I came, in consequence of some illness that had been prevailing in the city and district of Zenjaun; and that I must perform a three days' purification before being permitted to proceed to Tabreez.

I need not say that I was heartily provoked and annoyed—but there was nothing for it; the officer said "it was the order—and you Feringhees, you know, are stricter in your quarantine laws than in anything else.—*Nizám, nizám!* (discipline) must be maintained, you know." However bitter the pill might be, what could I do but acquiesce?—so, after sitting awhile in grim silence, I took out my writing

things to send a note to my friends, informing them of my situation. While this was going on, the officers, both young men, questioned me more particularly respecting my business with the *Elchee*, and the places I came from. On this I produced the Shah's firmaun, and another from Cahraman Meerza, at Mushed, which appeared to throw a new light on the subject, for they now said they would not detain, but only *smoke* me—happy hearing! To the fumigation, which was most inefficiently performed in a little hole under ground, I readily submitted, and then was declared pure and free; but an order, they said, would be needed to pass my baggage, otherwise it must await the three days' purification. The whole matter was a pure farce, got up to extort a little money, which, had they stated at once, I should gladly have paid. The quarantine had been in force after this fashion for months, not doing good, but evil, from the manner in which it was conducted. But it was past, and I rode gaily on,—that is, as gaily as my wearied horse would permit me,—to a village where I fed him and myself, that he might have strength to reach Tabreez.

Know you not that delightful sensation which fills the soul after long travel in remote and rude places, whether at home or abroad,—in the wild Highlands, for instance, where high and rough *beallachs*, miserable dirty inns, bad food, uncomfortable lodgings, dangerous ferries, &c. have perplexed the soul and made it long for home,—when the eye first catches a sight of the well-cultivated, well-peopled Lowlands, with their woods and inclosures, and farms and towns, and country seats, where, perhaps, our

own sweet home, or the abode of some dear friend, is situated? How the heart warms at the view!—how the eyes dance with very joy!—how eagerly we peer out for the sight of some familiar form long before it can possibly be visible! How dear have become the delights of social and domestic life, contrasted with the strong though passing excitement of dangerous adventure, and the dear purchased pleasure of viewing remote and savage scenes; in short, how perfectly convinced we have become of the comforts of civilization, of the value of "*bigged land*," as —— would say, and being once more among one's own people! Such were the feelings with which I saw, at length, the well-known red, rocky hill, above Tabreez, open to view, then its dark green gardens, then its old ark, and then its walls and white buildings, each in succession making its appearance as I rose from the defile in which the road lies, and ascended the little height which till then had concealed them. Twice before, as I have said already, had Tabreez been to me a refuge after hardship and anxiety, nor was it now less welcome than on those occasions. My poor horse suffered somewhat from the impatience which impelled me to clear the space that still intervened between me and the gates; but he seemed to participate in his master's feelings, and to know, at least, that his resting-place was nigh; for, as I trotted him along, he bore upon the bit, and once or twice broke voluntarily into a canter.

Had I not reason to be anxious and impatient? Four months and more had passed since I had seen or heard of my countrymen. Who were living, who

dead? What their position in these changing and critical times? What news from home — from England? What letters? Oh, who but those who have wandered far from home, in danger and uncertainty, and who have family and friends to think of and fear for, can know the mingled feelings of doubt and eagerness which fill the traveller's mind at such a time! At length the town *was* won, the gates *were* passed; I almost expected to be stopped at them as I inquired for the house of the *Hakeem Saheb*;—the English jack, waving from the staff, pointed out the way, and I reached it just as a party of the officers, then at Tabreez, were sitting down to lunch. The joyful moment of recognition and welcome soon was over, and I once more "sat with good men" at their "feasts," and heard the sounds of kindness and congratulation uttered in my own language.

You will believe that there was much to ask and much to tell — to hear and learn, nor will you wonder, that after paying my respects to the Envoy, and returning to a comfortable dinner—a dinner with *tables* and *chairs*, and *knives* and *forks*, and *spoons*, instead of carpets and fingers,—and in spite of two nights' fatigue, such conversation should keep me from my couch till midnight. One only alloy there was to the comfort I enjoyed. My friends, in their desire to relieve my anxiety, had sent my home letters to meet me at Resht: thus they were for a while removed from my reach. It was a galling circumstance, yet there was no help for it. But the next morning compensated for the temporary trial of patience, for a servant brought me the precious

packet, which had never gone to Resht, the person in whose charge it had been placed not having yet departed for that place. You may conceive the delight with which I pounced upon it, and with which, on eagerly skimming its contents, I found that "all was well." Adieu! in due time you shall hear of our "sayings and doings at Tabreez," and of what is likely to befal me, if God spares my life, on my further wanderings.

THE END.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY SAMUEL BENTLEY,
Dorset Street, Fleet Street.

00083452

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 06 February, 2016